Two Plays: Uncle Viva
and
The Lost Equilibrium

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To my wife and children



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The Lost Equilibrium

UNCLE VIVA

Characters (In Order of Appearance)

Dick
Dan
Jane
Suzy
Henry
Richard
Harry
Uncle Viva
Mary
Jack
The Priest
The Servant
Reta
Peter
Death
The Nurse
The Two Male Nurses
Betty
Ann
The Policeman
Voices of Nietzsche, Prince Aryan, *and* The Roman General's Slave



Act I

Scene I

The scene is the entrance overlooking the garden. There are six chairs on both sides. It is morning. Decorations show that it is a luxurious villa. **Dick** *is reading a newspaper and whistling. He stands up when he sees* **Dan** *coming from the door leading to the villa. There is a balcony on the first floor.*

Dick: What is the news, Dan?

Dan: What do you expect, Dick?

Dick: Well, you are a doctor . . . so you tell me.

Dan: For you . . . good news.

Dick: (*rubbing his hands, showing that he is pleased*) Fine . . . When is he expected to die?

Dan: Soon . . . You will inherit a big fortune.

Dick: That is true . . . (*contemplating, and as if talking to himself*) I will keep the company's name, but instead of being managed by Viva Coward, it will be managed by Dick Brown. (*Swaggering, he goes here and there while* **Dan** *is sitting watching him.*)

Dan: Will you find me a part-time job in your company?

Dick: Of course, doctor. You deserve as much for the news you bring. . . . But tell me, Dan . . . what is wrong with him?

Dan: Tumor in the brain.

Dick: Wonderful! How long will he live?

Dan: Maybe two months, a month, or only a week.

Dick: Let it be a week. . . . I'll arrange a magnificent funeral. . . . I will bring a band of musicians. . . . I will put his coffin on a carriage drawn by twenty horses.

Dan: Don't waste your money.

Dick: It is his money.

Dan: But it will be yours . . . or half of it will be yours.

Dick: But the family must feel that I boast of him. . . . I must gain his daughter's trust.

Dan: Sure! She is the key of his treasure.

Dick: You are sharp, Dan! You understand everything, don't you?

Dan: I am not as sharp as you, Dick.

Dick: My close friend must be witty.

Dan: But you excel me in that you seize the opportunity.

Dick: To some extent . . . (*he grins*) . . . to some extent.

Dan: To a great extent. . . . Love provides you with a fortune that work cannot bring in a thousand years.

Dick: It is so, indeed. I have chosen the wife that suits my ambition. (*He looks closely at* **Dan**.) Why don't you also love as I do? . . . I mean . . . find a rich girl to love.

Dan: I am not lucky. . . . The girl I love is poor . . . but she is beautiful, intelligent, and faithful.

Dick: Then find another one who can make you rich.

Dan: (*looking at the garden and, as if dreaming*) I love her and she loves me, too. (**Dick** *goes toward the phone and dials a number.*) Oh, what an angelic face! What a sweet voice! What . . . (*He turns around.*) Aren't you listening to me?

Dick: (*raising his hand to show him that he wants him to stop talking*) Hullo, Mr. Picnic. . . . Dick is speaking. . . . After half an hour. . . . Okay. (*He puts the receiver down.*) I have to see the lawyer . . . and I promised Jane to have an outing today!

Dan: Where is she?

Dick: She isn't in . . . and I am waiting for her.

Dan: Tell her that you are busy today.

Dick: Oh, no. . . . I want to have love planted deeper in her heart.

Dan: You aren't sure of her love, are you?

Dick: Well . . . (*moving his head to show that he doesn't exactly know*) She is simple and naive . . . but she is moody. Sometimes she seems to be deeply in love with me . . . sometimes I don't understand her.

Dan: If you don't understand her, you should find the one whom you understand.

Dick: I can understand her later . . . when we get married.

Dan: Will you marry her?

Dick: Sure! How can I get her father's fortune without marrying her?

Dan: (*moving his hand to show that he meant something else*) I know . . . I know. . . . I mean . . . do you really mean to marry her?

Dick: I have to. . . .Where are your brains, Dan?

Dan: I mean . . . do you really feel that you are in love with her? (*He stands up to leave.*)

Dick: I will be in love with her.

Dan: How can you guarantee to have love when you want?

Dick: Love always comes to my help. (*Someone is heard calling, "Jane . . . Jane."*) Oh, she is coming. (*Points to* **Dan** *to sit down. He looks at the door, then gives his back to the door and talks to* **Dan**.) Oh! I love her with all my heart! She is wonderful. (*She enters and stops to listen.*)

Dan: You are lucky to have such a beautiful fiancée.

Dick: Of course I am lucky. One day I will introduce her to you.

Jane: Here I am, Dick.

Dick: Oh! What a surprise! May I introduce you to Dr. Dan? (*then to* **Dan**) This is Miss Viva, my fiancée. (*Both say "How do you do?" in a superficial manner.*)

Jane: Isn't he the doctor who is going to see my father?

Dick: Oh, yes. He has already seen your father.

Dan: You will hear of good news soon.

Jane: Is he all right?

Dan: Well! You can say yes.

Jane: That's good news, indeed. . . . I love my father dearly.

Dick: And I love him, too.

Dan: (*mockingly*) He loves him, indeed! Just now he said that he would bring twenty horses . . .

Dick: (*shouting suddenly*) Dan . . . you forgot your appointment.

Dan: What appointment?

Dick: Oh! You have only seven minutes . . . you should hurry!

Dan: Oh, no, I cancelled all the appointments today. . . . I promised Mr. Coward to spend today here until the other doctors come and make a "consulto."

Jane: A consulto? . . . Is the case dangerous?

Dick: No, no. . . . Doctors send patients to each other.

Jane: You mean they exchange patients?

Dan: We don't do that except . . .

Dick: (*interrupting*). . . when they find that the patient is rich enough to pay for all . . .

Dan: (*annoyed*) Don't make the matter a joke.

Dick: (*to* **Dan**) I want to tell her that the consulto of today is not for a serious case. . . . (*turns to* **Jane**) Dan finds that your father can afford to pay the fees of three or four doctors . . . so he sent for his friends.

Dan: (*shouting angrily*) What did you say, Dick!

Jane: (*looks at* **Dan** *and* **Dick** *in a suspicious way*) Excuse me . . . I want to see Daddy. (*She moves quickly, going inside.*)

Dan: (*taking his bag in a nervous way*) I am not going to wait for the other doctors.

Dick: Don't be angry, Dan! Please wait.

Dan: (*reproaching him*) You show doctors to her as thieves.

Dick: Your tongue slipped, and you talked about consulto . . . so I wanted to change the subject.

Dan: By throwing accusations at doctors?

Dick: Just to save the situation.

Dan: How can you tell her the bad news?

Dick: There is no bad news at all. . . . All is well that ends well.

Jane: (*returns*) Dick! Where's Daddy! He's not in his room.

Dick: Let's look for him. (*They leave the stage, hurrying to the door. After a few seconds,* **Suzy** *and* **Henry** *come through the garden.*)

Suzy: Tell me, Henry, do you think that Dad is in danger . . . having a headache most of the time.

Henry: I don't know. . . . I am not a physician. . . . Will you tell Daddy that I am here?

Suzy: Yes, but please sit down. (*He sits down. She moves two meters and returns.*) I notice that you never give a frank answer.

Henry: Why do you have this wrong idea?

Suzy: It is not a wrong idea . . . it is the right idea.

Henry: That is what you think.

Suzy: Although I understand most men . . . I can't understand you.

Henry: Am I difficult to understand?

Suzy: All the girls say so.

Henry: Why the girls?

Suzy: Because we talk together about the members of the club.

Henry: I am an ordinary man . . . but . . .

Suzy: Mysterious, to make people think of your behavior. . . . It is a matter of attracting people's attention.

Henry: I don't get you, Suzy.

Suzy: Of course, you don't. . . . You have your own secret adventures.

Henry: I have no adventures whatsoever!

Suzy: As a psychiatrist . . . you should gain the trust of your patients.

Henry: And that I do. . . . That is why I am successful, thank God.

Suzy: (*looks at him silently for a minute*) You are not easy. . . . You are as deep as the sea.

Henry: Thank you for your compliment . . . but you have to understand me.

Suzy: You should understand me.

Henry: I do understand you . . . but you don't understand yourself.

Suzy: Show me that you understand me.

Henry: Is it important to do so?

Suzy: For me, yes.

Henry: When you become my patient, you will understand me.

Suzy: Oh! you know what the girls say about you?

Henry: No, I don't

Suzy: They say that you let your patients love you, but you don't reciprocate their love.

Henry: It is not my fault that they love me. . . . They should love me as a helper and no more.

Suzy: I am afraid of you, although I never feared any man.

Henry: Because they are your prey. (*She looks at him . . . seems disturbed . . . looks at him again and runs away . . . the telephone rings.*) Hullo! Oh, yes, she is at home. Hold on . . . I'll tell her. (*He cries out, "Suzy . . . Suzy" and enters the villa, then the uncle comes, lifts the receiver and puts it back.* **Henry** *returns and greets the uncle. The telephone rings again.* **Henry** *lifts the receiver.*)

Henry: Hullo! Oh . . . I am sorry. She drove away quickly. . . . Any message? Okay. Bye, bye. (*He puts down the reciever.*) How are you now, Mr. Richard Coward?

Richard: Your medicine makes me calm, but . . . (*stops*)

Henry: But what?

Richard: I don't know. . . .I want to know . . . why do we live?

Henry: Each philosophy tells us something. . . . But let me put the question in a simple form. . . . Don't you enjoy life?

Richard: No, I don't enjoy life. (*His voice rises.*) I hate life. . . . I hate people. . . . Let them all go to hell. (*His rage increases.*)

Henry: Come, come! (*He gives him a glass of water.*) Please sit comfortably.

Richard: Where's your comfortable couch? You want me to relax and confess.

Henry: Just relax in your own chair. Let's have a friendly

chat. (**Henry** *nods to him gently.* **Richard** *looks at him, then sits down.*)

Richard: I see a devil coming to me. . . . He wants me to commit suicide.

Henry: No, you are not weak enough to obey him. . . . You have your own will.

Richard: I'll not obey him . . . but I feel that I don't like to live in this world. (*voices coming*)

Henry: (*hastily*) Stop now. I'll be waiting for you at the clinic.

(**Richard** *stands up, and* **Dan** *and* **Harry** *enter.*)

Dan: Hullo, Henry.

Henry: Hullo, Dan. Have you examined Mr. Coward?

Dan: Yes . . . but I can't decide until after receiving the analyses.

Henry: Can I meet Mr. Coward now, or is he asleep?

Dan: No, he is in the sitting room. (**Henry** *enters. They look at* **Richard**, *who is gazing at them.* **Harry** *signals to* **Dan***—indicating that* **Richard** *is mad—by moving his fingers in turning movements near his head—and* **Dan** *nods that he understands.*)

Richard: (*to* **Harry**) Where's Suzy?

Harry: She is at home.

Richard: Have you seen her?

Harry: Of course!

Richard: You are a liar!

Harry: Why, my uncle?

Richard: Because she drove away quickly.

Harry: I didn't know that she has just left.

Richard: You only want her wealth. (**Dan** *and* **Harry** *look at each other meaningfully.*)

Dan: Oh, no. How much is her wealth?

Richard: Why do you ask? It is her fiancé that has to ask.

Harry: Okay. How much is her health? No, no . . . how much is her wealth?

Richard: Why do you ask? . . . Because you are greedy.
Harry: Oh, no, Uncle. . . . You asked me to ask . . . So I asked. . . . But if you hadn't told me, I wouldn't have asked. . . . I am obedient to you . . . to your brother and to your niece.
Richard: Until you get hold of her fortune.
Harry: (*pretends to weep*) Oh, Uncle. . . . Don't be cruel to me. . . . I am poor . . . and I'll continue to be poor. . . . If I am not poor, I wish I were poor.
Richard: What a good actor you are!
Harry: Do you praise me or . . .
Richard: I don't know. (*He suddenly leaves the stage.* **Suzy** *looks stiltedly from the balcony and withdraws gently without being noticed.*)
Harry: It seems that all the members of this family are mad.
Dan: Then why are you eager to be one of them?
Harry: To be as rich as they are.
Dan: And as mad as they are. (**Suzy** *appears and quickly disappears after nodding. She didn't show herself to them.*)
Harry: Isn't life a mad world?
Dan: That's true . . . madness begets madness.
Harry: So I find madness here as anywhere else. . . . So I get madness and fortune rather than madness and nothing.
Dan: Which is better, health or wealth?
Harry: For me wealth comes before health. . . . If I have money, I can bring food . . . and food makes me healthy. . . . So what comes first?
Dan: Health, of course.
Harry: You are a doctor. . . . If I have money I can go to your clinic.
Dan: (*mockingly*) And buy health?
Harry: (*laughs, but* **Dan** *gazes at him*) You are a witty doctor.
Dan: Thank you. (*looks at his watch and looks at the side of the stage, which represents the entrance of the villa*) Why are they late?
Harry: Who is late? Suzy?
Dan: The doctors haven't arrived yet. (*Moves toward the door*)

I will go to fetch them . . . they may have forgotten. (*He leaves the stage.* **Viva** *enters.*)

Harry: (*in a fictitious way*) Hullo, Dad . . . how are you now?

Viva: Hullo, Harry. Where is Suzy?

Harry: I don't know. . . . I am waiting for her.

Viva: Are you still quarrelling . . . or on good terms now?

Harry: Sometimes so . . . sometimes so.

Viva: Can't you understand each other?

Harry: I am trying . . . but . . . (*He signals but doesn't continue.*)

Viva: As I always tell you and Dick . . . I give my daughters the freedom to choose the suitable future husband . . . but if I find that she is not on good terms with her husband, I will not give her any money at all.

Harry: I know this well . . . but I want her to love me as much as I love her.

Viva: What do you mean by "want"?

Harry: I mean I wish.

Viva: Is it only a wish?

Harry: I mean I hope.

Viva: (*gazing at him*) Want or wish or hope?

Harry: I mean that . . . (*He moves his fingers and hands to explain but doesn't speak.* **Suzy** *and* **Richard** *come from the inside of the house.*) Oh, Suzy! I was searching for you.

Suzy: Where? Between the chairs?

Harry: Won't you go to the beach with me?

Suzy: Yes . . . but I want to know what the doctors say about Dad.

Viva: I am okay, Suzy. . . . Go with your fiancé . . . I am accustomed to check-ups. . . . I am in good health. (*He puts his hand on his head.*) Only this bad headache.

Harry: Okay, Dad . . . we will go to the beach. (*They leave the stage hand-in-hand.*)

Viva: (*Still looking at* **Richard**, *who looks back at him. But they don't exchange words for two minutes.*) I hope you go regularly to Dr. Henry.

Richard: No, not regularly.

Viva: But I pay for your treatment. (*raising his voice*) There is no need to waste my money.

Richard: Your money! . . . Your money! I don't want any help from anyone.

Viva: You need everybody's help. (*He moves up and down the stage while* **Richard** *is sitting and looking at the wall, giving him his back.*) The number of those who go to psychiatrists is far more than those who go to physicians! Why?

Richard: (*turning around to face him*) You think that I have a mental disease, as my neighbors say?

Viva: You see that your neighbors noticed it, too.

Richard: The nurse told me and told them about the mental disease . . . and . . .

Viva: (*interrupting in rage*) What do people say about me when they hear of that disease . . .

Richard: (*in anger*) You are selfish. . . . You think only of yourself. . . . You like to be the richest man in our city . . . and the most famous one . . . and . . .

Viva: (*trying to calm him*) My dear Brother . . . I . . .

Richard: (*interrupting*) Do you really consider me dear! Why didn't you help me when I was in need?

Viva: Because I didn't agree with your plans. . . . I didn't want to waste my money.

Richard: (*standing*) Your money . . . your money . . . Will you take your money with you after death?

Viva: Don't I help you when you need money?

Richard: When you find that your enemies increase, you send for me and help me.

Viva: My enemies are countless—they want to kill me. . . . I need my brother, my daughters, and my friends beside me.

Richard: You see, Viva . . . when you are in trouble, you remember those who love you.

Viva: I always need those who love me . . . they give me warmth . . . they give me a feeling of belongingness. . . . My enemies . . . (*thinks deeply*) are all around me.

Richard: Where are they? (*looking around*) I am ready to kill them . . . I want to kill them all.

Viva: Thank you, Richard. . . . Tell me . . . are you improving? . . . I mean . . . (*thinking*) Well . . . I will call Henry up. (*dialing the phone*) Hullo, Henry . . . I need to talk to you. . . . I am badly in need of your soothing words. . . . Thank you. (*He puts down the receiver.*)

Richard: You want me to meet him. . . . No . . . I am leaving. (*He runs outside.*)

Viva: Oh! What a strange man. (**Mary** *enters*) Come, Mary . . . come . . . I wish my daughters were as wise as you are.

Mary: Thank you, Uncle. . . . It is kind of you to praise me.

Viva: You are a good girl, indeed. . . . (*Looking at the garden, he seems to remember something.*) You remind me of a dear girl I used to criticize . . . although I loved her.

Mary: You attacked the girl whom you loved?

Viva: Yes, I was silly, indeed. . . . We do many foolish deeds. . . . We don't feel the value of the thing we have except when we lose it. . . .

Mary: Do you mean your wife?

Viva: Do I have a wife now, Mary?

Mary: I mean your late wife. . . . (*He shakes his head and seems to remember the past.*)

Viva: That's another story. . . . Was the fire an accident, or did she kill herself?

Mary: What is that, my uncle? Didn't she die peacefully in her bed? (*He feels conscious all of a sudden.*)

Viva: What did you say, Mary? . . . Oh! . . . What did I say? Mary . . . please . . . Don't talk of this story to my daughters? Please . . . you are the only one to hear what I have just now said. . . .

Mary: Be sure . . . Uncle . . . that I don't betray people's secrets. . . .

Viva: I am sure of it . . . Mary. . . . You are as kind-hearted as Reta.

Mary: Who is Reta?

Viva: (*dials the phone*) You will meet her . . . if she agrees to come. . . . Hullo—Reta . . . please. (*to* **Mary**) She is an angel incarnated. . . . Reta? . . . This is Viva talking. Good morning. . . . How are you? You seem surprised, I think, but you used to say . . . when you need help, you'll find me near. . . . Yes . . . that was twenty years ago . . . but I still remember your words. . . . Please come to visit an old friend who is badly in need of your help. . . . Thank you, Reta. . . . Bye . . . bye till I see you this afternoon.

Mary: Are you in trouble, Uncle?

Viva: (*pressing his hand on his head*) Oh, this bad headache . . . causes me a lot of pain. . . . Something is pressing on my brain. . . . (*He moves around.*)

Mary: Then you are suffering, Uncle.

Viva: This is a physical suffering, but . . . many things torture me . . . incidents of the past are coming back . . . many painful experiences are remembered every now and then. . . . (*He sits down while* **Mary** *is watching him sympathetically.*)

Mary: Ask for God's help.

Viva: (*smiling*) You are wise in your behavior but you are also naive.

Mary: Do you consider me naive if I ask for God's help?

Viva: When you are hungry . . . you do what?

Mary: I eat.

Viva: When you are thirsty . . .

Mary: I drink.

Viva: When you are tired . . .

Mary: I rest.

Viva: When I am ill . . . I send for the doctor.

Mary: That's true . . . but I also pray . . . asking for God's help.

Viva: Mary, we are now living in the age of science.

Mary: So what?

Viva: We should have scientific thinking.

Mary: Scientific thinking has nothing to do with your materialistic outlook, Uncle.

Viva: Oh, Mary . . . I didn't marry Reta because of her discussion . . . and her nonsense.

Mary: Although you loved her.

Viva: Yes . . . because we were different.

Mary: So you lost much.

Viva: I don't know. . . . If I had married her, I would not have become as rich as I am now.

Mary: Which do you prefer . . . wealth or peace of mind?

Viva: Are you asking me?

Mary: No . . . I was just contemplating. (**Jack** *comes hurriedly.*)

Jack: Hullo, Mary. (*to* **Viva**) What is wrong, Viva?

Viva: Everything is wrong. . . . They tried to kill me twice.

Jack: Why don't you tell the police.

Viva: I don't know who they are. . . . Enemies are everywhere. Why do they want to kill me?

Jack: Because they are jealous of you.

Viva: Is it the price of success? Why don't they succeed as I do? . . . Are we in a forest?

Jack: Yes, we are. . . . Aren't we the descendants of animals?

Mary: What did you say, Mr. Black?

Jack: That's true. . . . The strongest survive . . . the big fish eat the small ones. . . .

Viva: We are living in an evil world. . . . Everything around me is wrong. . . . People hate me. . . . I don't know why. . . .

Mary: We love you, Uncle. (**Viva** *pats on her shoulder.*)

Viva: Thank you . . . Mary. (*to* **Jack**) Isn't Mary the same type as Reta?

Jack: They are this type of weak animal.

Mary: Physically weak . . . but spiritually strong. (*Both* **Viva** *and* **Jack** *laugh.* **Mary** *becomes annoyed.*) Why do you laugh?

Jack: I am a scientist, as you know. I have the objective attitude towards everything . . . so I don't accept metaphysical ideas.

Mary: How do you feel when you face death?
Jack: I don't know . . . because I haven't passed through such an experience.
Mary: How do you describe death?
Jack: We become dry leaves and fall.
Viva: Fall to where?
Jack: To the ground . . . according to the laws of gravity.
Viva: (*seems troubled*) And that is . . . the end?
Jack: (*simply*) Yes, that's the end of life.
Viva: So . . . what is the meaning of life?
Jack: Life means birth . . . growth . . . then death.
Viva: (*annoyed*) Are you giving a lecture in biology?
Jack: I am a biologist.
Viva: (*inquisitively*) What is the meaning behind this?
Jack: That's philosophy.
Viva: Call it what you will . . . I want to understand. . . . Where are we going? (*He puts his hand on his brow.*)
Mary: Our souls return to Heaven. (*The phone rings.* **Viva** *picks up the receiver.*)
Viva: (*his face turns white*) Who are you? . . . I don't know you. . . . Why do you want to kill me? (*He looks at the receiver in surprise when he puts it down.*) There is a big plot. (**Dan** *and the doctors arrive.*) You are going to examine me in my room? (*They nod*) Okay, let's go inside.

(*The curtain falls.*)

Scene II

The Scene: The same as in Act I, Scene I.

Henry *and* **Viva** *are sitting together.*

Viva: Thank you for coming . . . Henry.
Henry: But I am sorry to hear what you told me.
Viva: I heard the doctor whispering that . . . (*pauses*)

Henry: Why don't you make more analyses . . . and make sure . . .

Viva: (*trying to seem courageous*) One of them whispered that . . . "My days are counted."

Henry: You may have imagined you heard . . . you . . .

Viva: (*seems to be not listening to* **Henry**) So my enemies want to kill me and now illness cooperates with my enemies.

Henry: Don't be desperate.

Viva: I don't yield to despair. . . . Yesterday you were talking about . . . (*thinking*) then they interrupted our talk, and you left.

Henry: Oh, yes . . . I said . . . let's look within ourselves.

Viva: That's right. . . . We like to know what bothers us . . . what makes us happy. . . . I like to know about psychoanalysis.

Henry: Have you read books about psychoanalysis?

Viva: Oh, Henry! I am too busy to waste my time on reading.

Henry: Do you consider reading a waste of time?

Viva: For a successful businessman, it is.

Henry: I don't share your opinion.

Viva: Reading is useful because you need it in your profession . . . but I have a lot to do.

Henry: To increase your wealth . . . ?

Viva: That's true . . . and I succeeded.

Henry: Will you get angry if I tell you the truth?

Viva: The truth about what?

Henry: About your attitude toward life.

Viva: No . . . I like to listen to you.

Henry: You succeeded in one part only.

Viva: You mean I failed in other parts?

Henry: That's it. . . . You didn't look within yourself.

Viva: Oh! I forgot. . . . I want to know what is in myself. . . . It gives me pleasure.

Henry: Do you think so?

Viva: Yes. . . . If man knows what is inside him.

Henry: I have to be clearer. . . . I mean something and you understand something else.

Viva: Do you mean I can't get you?

Henry: I mean by the word "inside" the spiritual part which is neglected by modern man . . . and you think I mean the psychological part only.

Viva: I see. . . . Then you are not only a psychiatrist but a preacher as well. (**Richard** *enters and sits.*)

Henry: Man should satisfy all his needs: physical needs, social and psychological needs, and spiritual needs.

Viva: Now I hear philosophy, too.

Henry: This is common knowledge, but man nowadays thinks of one thing . . . the physical needs.

Richard: I need money. . . . Money is all that I need. . . . Money gives me everything.

Henry: Does it give you pleasure?

Richard: What else gives me pleasure?

Henry: Many things. . . . Success gives you pleasure . . . peace of mind gives you pleasure . . . self-satisfaction gives you pleasure.

Viva: Money helps me to succeed. . . . I'll give you an example from my own life. . . . When I married a rich woman . . . I found the money that has helped me to be successful and rich.

Henry: Does it give you peace of mind and self-satisfaction?

Richard: Give me money, Viva, to be happy.

Viva: (*to* **Richard**) Listen to the discussion and don't make any silly interruptions. . . . (*to* **Henry**) Yes, doctor?

Henry; The great discoveries and inventions are not made by money. . . . Talents cannot be bought by money. . . . What is your answer?

Viva: You read more books, so I cannot beat you in discussion . . . so let's talk about Richard's case.

Henry: I told you that I am ready to start right now, but when he feels he is in need of help and comes to me.

Viva: (*to* **Richard**) Why don't you go to Henry? He will help you and . . .

Richard: (*interrupting*) I need your help first. . . . Give me enough money and I'll be pleased.

Viva: Go to him, and I'll pay for your treatment.

Richard: Am I mad?

Henry: Psychological cases don't mean madness. . . . Come to me and we will have a long talk.

Richard: Okay. Tomorrow in the afternoon.

Henry: (*gets out his note*) At four o'clock? (**Richard** *nods and* **Henry** *writes down*) My job is to help people who suffer.

Viva: I suffer a lot . . . but only the physician can help me.

Henry: You always think of the physical part, but the psychological part may be more important.

Richard: We live in a bad world . . . all the people are like animals. . . . I hate life because it is full of evil.

Henry: But don't forget those who give . . . they are candles that light the dark world.

Richard: You are dreaming, doctor. . . . I've met only people who are selfish. . . . They want only to take. . . . They don't care if they destroy others.

Viva: Be strong and work. . . . You must earn your own living . . . don't eat the ready food of others.

Richard: Look, doctor! The poor have only to suffer. . . . What kind of life are we living now?

Henry: Don't look at the dark side of life. . . . You should be optimistic.

Richard: (*turns everywhere*) Everywhere is dark. . . . Dark hearts surround me. . . . (*He goes to a corner.*) Look! Everyone is in a hurry. . . . No one stands to give me a look of pity.

Viva: Don't wait for a look of pity. . . . Run among us . . . be successful . . . and you can enjoy life. (*He puts his hand on his brow.*) Oh! The headache again. . . . (*dials the doctor's number*) Hullo, Dan. . . . Please come in.

Richard: You have money, so you send for the doctor just for having a headache.

Viva: (*suffering*) It is a severe headache.

Henry: I hope you will be better soon.

Viva: Thanks. (*to his brother*) You see, Richard . . . your bitter words cause my headache.

Richard: (*to* **Henry**) You see, doctor! I can't complain of anything. . . . People hate to listen to my sufferings. (*leaves the stage suddenly*)

Viva: He is a failure. Everyone tells him so. Even his girl friend tells him so.

Henry: Beware of intensifying his case. . . . I think he suffers from "depression."

Viva: Is his case serious?

Henry: If it is depression . . . he loses hope in life. . . . He may even commit suicide.

Viva: Then he will be a fool.

Henry: It is not a matter of being a fool or not. . . . You have to stop him.

Viva: I am surrounded by problems. (*He puffs the air nervously.*) How many problems have I to solve?

Henry: (*sarcastically*) Can't your money solve your problems?

Viva: (*looks at him, then he shakes his head*) Sometimes I find it better not to think of anything.

Henry: You mean you like to escape from facing the problems?

Viva: (*nods and sighs*) That's true . . . what else can I do? (*The telephone rings.*) Hullo. . . . Oh, yes. . . . Who is speaking? . . . Peter. . . . Bring the papers and come.

Henry: (*looks at his watch*) Excuse me. . . . I have to leave now.

Viva: (*absentmindedly*) This Peter is another problem.

Henry: (*repeating*) Excuse me. . . . I have to leave now.

Viva: Okay, doctor. Although I feel relieved when I talk to you, I can't keep you longer. (**Henry** *leaves while* **Dan** *is entering.*) Thank you for coming.

Dan: I'll give you something to relieve your pain temporarily, but the operation is a must.

Viva: But the operation is dangerous.

Dan: Don't you notice that headache is incessant?

Viva: Yes (*frightened*) . . . but . . .

Dan: You have to decide.

Viva: Can't you find any other remedy?

Dan: I'll let you meet the "consulto" again.

Viva: Okay, I am waiting for you. (**Dan** *leaves.* **Viva** *is distressed and puffs the air. He stands up, goes up and down the stage, seems annoyed and nervous. He looks at the garden and a voice on a tape is heard; that is, we hear what goes on inside his mind: "Then I am about to die. . . . I have to decide . . . whether to die quickly during the operation . . . or wait until death comes and snatches me out of this world. . . . Am I to tell my daughters? . . . No . . . I don't want them to suffer as I do. . . . But . . ." The sound of music expressing confusion and trouble mingled with fear is still heard. Then a priest enters in an awkward way.* **Viva** *turns and looks at him.*)

Viva: May I help you, sir?

The Priest: I come for service. . . . I usually visit those who are about to die . . . those who are ill . . . and the family of the dead person.

Viva: Who sent you?

The Priest: Miss Mary Coward.

Viva: Oh! My niece . . . why?

The Priest: She told me that there is a person in this house who is about to die . . . or I think a deceased person.

Viva: What is his name?

The Priest: Viva.

Viva: What help can you offer?

The Priest: It is my job. . . . I preach people to do good and not to fear death.

Viva: Don't you fear death?

The Priest: I don't know . . . I haven't faced it yet. . . . Where is Viva?

Viva: I am Viva.

The Priest: You are the deceased person? I mean, you are the person who is about to die?

Viva: (*sarcastically*) Yes, I am.

The Priest: (*smiling naively*) Oh! You are still alive . . . and you seem in good health.

Viva: (*nervously*) Yes . . . in good health.

The Priest: But why are you nervous?

Viva: I am nervous because you make me nervous.
The Priest: Come, come. . . . Have you committed any sin?
Viva: Yes, I have.

(**The Priest** *acts in a foolish way to cause laughter now. We laugh at his personality, not his job.* **Viva** *acts in a comic way throughout this part of the scene, to lesson the morbid shadow of death that will be clear in Act II.)*

The Priest: Oh! It is too bad. . . . You must repent right now. . . . Sin leads to man's death.
Viva: (*upset*) I'll die because of a tumor.
The Priest: Be courageous and face death bravely.
Viva: (*acting in a comic way*) Death . . . I face you bravely. . . . Death . . . come. (*looks everywhere, turns around and looks under the chair*) Death . . . I don't fear you. (*pointing toward the door*) He is coming this way.
The Priest: (*moves toward the door and returns*) No . . . he is not coming. No one is coming.
Viva: But I see him. . . . (*repeating*) Death . . . I don't fear you. (*bravely, then hesitatingly—and his voice shows fear—he repeats*) Death . . . I . . . don't . . . fe . . . ar . . . fe . . . ar . . . you. (*Tears fall down his cheeks.*)
The Priest: (*soothingly*) Come. Come. . . . Have you heard Donne's poem about death?
Viva: No . . . I haven't. . . . I only know about Epicure.
The Priest: Oh . . . terrible . . . terrible. . . . You live only for your "Body" . . . and not for your "Soul."
Viva: We live once in life . . . we have to enjoy every minute of it.
The Priest: John Donne said (*acting and raising voice*): "Death be not proud: You will die!"
Viva: (*stretching his arm as in demonstrations*) Let death die . . . so that we can live. (*He repeats the sentence in a comic way.*) Let death die . . . so that . . . we . . . we can . . . live . . . live. (*looking at* **The Priest**) I want to live.

The Priest: What kind of life?

Viva: Life as I understand it . . . life of pleasure.

Mary: (*enters and addresses* **The Priest**) Thank you for coming.

The Priest: Your uncle is stubborn. (*raising his voice*) You should be prepared for death.

Viva: (*in a hysterical way*) Stop talking about death. . . . Do you come to agitate me?

Mary: He comes to calm you.

Viva: Sorry, Mary. . . . You failed to send the right man.

The Priest: It is the first time to meet a man . . . who . . . who . . .

Viva: Who . . . what?

The Priest: (*to* **Mary**) Your uncle is nervous . . . he should be calm. . . . Your uncle is stubborn, he should be obedient. . . . Your uncle is afraid of death . . . he should be courageous. . . .

Viva: Your uncle . . . your uncle . . . What do you know about me?

(**Suzy** *and* **Jane** *come, watching what is happening.*)

Mary: Please, Uncle . . . he wants to help you . . . Give him a chance.

Viva: What kind of help?

Mary: Spiritual help. . . . When in trouble, we should listen to soothing words.

Viva: (*becomes somewhat calm*) That's true . . . but he is not the right man for the job.

The Priest: I am qualified.

Viva: But it is not your vocation. . . . You are not gifted.

Mary: (*to the priest*) Thank you, Father. . . . My uncle is too upset.

(**The Priest** *leaves the stage.*)

Suzy: Why did you bring him, Mary?
Mary: Is there any harm in this?
Suzy: Do you believe in what he says?
Mary: I do believe in God.
Viva: You are naive, Mary . . . but you are kind-hearted.
Suzy: Mary should live in a primitive society, not our civilized society.
Mary: What is civilization for you?
Suzy: Do as you wish . . . in the way you like.
Mary: *(calmly)* But this will lead to chaos.
Suzy: I am an existentialist. . . . I am Suzy Coward, feeling free . . . and enjoying everything around me.
Mary: You enjoy the materialistic side in life.
Suzy: Everything in life is materialistic.
Mary: That's your point of view. (**Viva** *is not following what they say. He is absentminded and looking at the garden.*)
Suzy: And that is what most people believe.
Mary: In every age . . . we find people who live for their bodies and those who live for their souls.
Suzy: *(seizes a camera)* With this camera . . . I'll take a photo of you. . . . Show me where the soul is.
Mary: It can't be touched. . . . we can see its aspects.
Jane: What are you quarreling about?
Suzy: She is blind and cannot see the world in which we live.
Jane: You are blind, too. . . . You see what you want to see. . . . You are always selfish. . . . You want to be the only girl who is distinguished.
Suzy: You are always jealous of me. (**Viva** *turns around.*)
Viva: *(in a loud voice)* Stop this silly talk. . . . I want peace of mind, but you don't give me this peace of mind.
Suzy: Jane hates me.
Jane: Suzy hates me.
Viva: Why do you always talk about "hate"? Why don't you think only of loving each other?
Suzy: Jane is always against me. . . . Mary is also against me. . . . Even my fiancé is against me.
Viva: And your father?

Suzy: He is always busy. . . . We don't talk to him much.
Viva: I want to make a fortune for you.
Jane: Suzy wants to take everything to her home.
Suzy: You also want to take what you can.
Viva: All my fortune is for you. . . . Don't quarrel. . . . I want to know your opinion about your fiancés.
Mary: (*stands up*) Excuse me, Uncle . . . this is a private talk. (**Viva** *nods and she leaves.*)
Suzy: I don't trust anyone . . . and Harry in particular.
Viva: So you are not on good terms.
Suzy: I don't understand myself. . . . Sometimes I like him. . . . I boast of him as a champion. . . . Sometimes I feel I hate him . . . but I always distrust him.
Viva: And you, Jane?
Jane: Dick seems a nice fellow . . . but what is behind his gentle behavior . . . I don't know. . . . He is a man of etiquette. . . . He is smart, witty, and polite . . . but his real feeling is not quite clear.
Viva: All of you talk like psychologists. . . . Henry says, "Look within ourselves." . . . Suzy is Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde . . . having love and hate in one character . . . good and evil together. . . . Jane doesn't know "what is behind his gentle behavior."

(*A* **Servant** *enters. They look at him.*)

The Servant: Miss Reta Bradly has arrived.
Suzy and **Jane:** On business?
Viva: (*perplexed*) Oh, yes. . . . Go to the club now.

(**Suzy** *and* **Jane** *leave the stage.*)

Viva: Is she alone?
The Servant: Yes, sir.
Viva: Let her in. (*He stands up, looks in the direction of the door, seems pleased, then sits down.*)
Viva: Come in, Reta. . . . I am sorry I cause you trouble.

Reta: No trouble at all.

Viva: We are different in our attitudes to life and supernatural elements. . . . But I trust you, Reta.

Reta: Thank you. (*He looks at her for a moment and does not talk.*) What service can I offer?

Viva: I want you to execute my will . . . because my daughters are too young to know their interests. They are easily deceived . . . their suitors are ready to make plans to enmesh them in their nets. . . . Their uncle is not the man who can look after them, and they need a faithful friend beside them.

Reta: Why are you pessimistic?

Viva: I am not . . . but it is a real fact. . . . When I phoned you this morning, I wanted you to be near me. . . . There were two attempts this week to kill me. . . . You know that I have many enemies.

Reta: You were always fond of defeating other people, calling them your enemies.

Viva: Are they friendly and I consider them enemies?

Reta: You used to say competition means one wins and the other loses.

Viva: Life is a battle. . . . We are in a forest. . . . The strong eat the weak.

Reta: Why do you ignore cooperation? Why do you want only to take, but not to give?

Viva: Are we going to repeat what we used to say in the past?

Reta: Why not? Can't you change?

Viva: Please, Reta. . . . I am sending for you not to blame me. . . . I want you to do me a favor. . . . It is a burden on you . . . but . . .

Reta: It is no burden at all. . . . If I can help, I must help . . . but why do you now think of these things?

Viva: I received the analyses this afternoon. . . . I am in danger. . . . My life time is limited.

Reta: Who knows when he dies?

Viva: My days are counted on your hand two or three times, so I should arrange for my daughters' future. . . . I don't trust their suitors.

Reta: You don't trust all people.

Viva: Except very few people, and you are one of them.

Reta: Thank you for your trust in me. (*They look at each other without speech for a few minutes.*) You should have hope.

Viva: The doctors admit that the operation is dangerous, and without the operation I will surely die.

Reta: All of us will die . . . but the doctors help only . . . they expect . . . When does any of us die? We can't tell. . . . We naive people—as you call us—believe that God decides when we die. . . . Don't lose hope.

Viva: Who doesn't want to live? Who doesn't want to enjoy the pleasures of life? Who doesn't want to see the beauty of nature and the smiles of our dear ones?

Reta: Why do you always imagine evil?

Viva: Look around you. . . . You find opportunists, deceivers, intriguers, and all kinds of parasites.

Reta: But there are also good people. . . . There are people who wipe the tears of the orphans . . . who bring back the smiles to those who suffer. . . .

Viva: Very, very few.

Reta: No, dear. . . . If those who build are fewer than those who destroy . . . life would come to an end.

Viva: I don't see what you say.

Reta: Because you only look at those who are in a fight with life. . . . You enjoy victories.

Viva: My enemies will have victory when death snatches me within the few coming days.

Reta: Why don't you make your enemies your friends?

Viva: An enemy is an enemy and a friend is a friend.

Reta: If you apply the humanistic outlook you will find most of the people friendly. . . . This is one of my principles.

Viva: If I had followed your principles, I would have been a beggar.

Reta: Do you think so?

Viva: That's true, Reta. . . . Chances should be sought and caught. . . . You should know how to deal with the sons of Satan in order to gain more and more.

Reta: Are all successful men evil persons?

Viva: This is the type I used to meet.

Reta: You chose that way . . . but you can see honest people who succeed in life.

Viva: And make money? No . . . and . . . no.

Reta: That is the main point of departure for us. . . . You consider money as an end . . . and I consider money as a means to live with.

Viva: (*feeling nervous*) There is no time to argue about that. . . . I may die after a week, a day, or even a minute . . . so please let me tell you important things.

Reta: Okay, Viva. . . . I am all ears.

Viva: Thank you. . . . I want to send for my lawyer to make you the executor of my will, if you accept.

Reta: I am ready to do any beneficiary deed.

Reta: (*stands up*) May I leave now?

Viva: Are you in a hurry?

Reta: (*looks at her watch*) I have to be back to work in half an hour.

Viva: My driver will get you there in ten minutes, so you can stay with me for twenty minutes.

Reta: Okay. (*sits and turns to* **Viva**, *whose eyes are fixed on her*) You haven't changed up till now.

Viva: I still keep your love inside my heart.

Reta: (*flushing*) I mean . . . you haven't abandoned your materialistic outlook.

Viva: What is wrong with my outlook?

Reta: You worship money.

Viva: No . . . I have made a fortune. . . . You don't understand me. . . . You belittle my achievements.

Reta: What are your achievements?

Viva: Don't you consider my successful firms an achievement? All businessmen know my name.

Reta: Will you take your money with you to the other world?

(**Harry** *enters.*)

Harry: (*jokingly*) I can send it to him.

Viva: Oh! Is it you again, Harry?

Harry: Of course, I can't leave you facing troubles alone. . . . I knew about the analyses.

Reta: (*to* **Viva**) Is he a relative of yours?

Harry: Yes, I am his son.

Reta: (*amazed*) Is it true?

Harry: I would like to be his son because I love him as my father.

Viva: He will be my son-in-law, if love between him and Suzy doesn't evaporate.

Harry: Oh, Father . . . does love vanish quickly?

Reta: Is it important to have love?

Harry: Of course. . . . Without love, life would be nothing.

Reta: It seems that you love many things, but you don't know love.

Harry: Pardon, ma'am . . . I don't get you.

Viva: Neither did I in the past.

Reta: If you love "love" let it lead you to the way of love.

Viva: Still, I can't understand you. . . . By the way, I forgot to introduce you to each other.

Reta: He introduced himself to me.

Harry: But you haven't been introduced to me.

Viva: Well, this is my heir, Harry. . . . She will get all my money.

Harry: (*surprised and depressed*) Is she your daughter?

Viva: More. . . . She is everything to me.

Harry: (*uneasy*) Will you deprive Suzy of your wealth?

Viva: Yes, she has to make money with her own efforts.

Harry: But she is young and she can't bear the life of poverty.

Viva: She knows that I left her nothing.

Harry: But she didn't tell me that.

Reta: Because the subject is of no importance.

Harry: What do you mean, madam?

Reta: Money is not important. . . . Love is the most important thing, isn't it?

Harry: Love and money are the two great pillars of life.

Viva: But I lived my life on one pillar—money.

Reta: (*looks at her watch*) It is time to leave . . . see you later.

Viva: See you tomorrow. . . . Please come tomorrow.

(**Reta** *nods and leaves the stage, looking at* **Viva** *with pity, but* **Harry** *is gazing at her and hatred is clear in his eyes.*)

Viva: (*beckons to* **Harry**, *who comes near, and whispers*) I'll tell you a secret. . . . I'll marry her.

Harry: So you haven't married her yet?

Viva: No, not yet . . . but I'll send for my lawyer to arrange everything.

Harry: (*seems to think*) But this will cause a shock to Suzy.

Viva: Don't tell Suzy. . . . Please . . . keep this a secret. . . . (**Harry** *seems puzzled.*) Can I rely on you?

Harry: Sure, sure . . . all your secrets are safe. (**Peter** *enters, carrying some papers. His eyes are gazing. His aggressive nature is clear in his eyes.*)

Viva: Come and sit down, Peter. (**Peter** *is still standing.*)

Peter: I have bad news. (*Both* **Viva** *and* **Harry** *look attentively at him.*) A big fire suddenly broke out in the factory.

Viva: Is it an accident?

Peter: I don't know.

Viva: Have the firemen arrived?

Peter: Yes, sir . . . but when I left the fire wasn't yet under control. (**Viva** *is disturbed.*)

Viva: Come, Peter, to the drawing room and let me sign the papers now. . . . Excuse me, Harry. (*They both go inside.* **Harry** *is gazing at the garden when* **Suzy** *arrives.*)

Harry: Suzy! It is nice that you come in the proper time.

Suzy: Anything wrong?

Harry: For us . . . yes.

Suzy: What is wrong?

Harry: Dad is going to marry an ugly woman and will give her all his fortune.

Suzy: Please don't joke now. . . . You take life as a joke.

Harry: Sorry to say that I am serious for the first time. . . . Do you know what it means for us?

Suzy: Nothing . . . nothing . . . This is the best thing for Dad. . . . He will have hope . . . in life. . . . That is the best piece of news you have ever told me. . . . I'll go to see him. (*She runs inside.*)

Harry: (*alone*) What? What kind of a girl am I going to marry? . . . I have to go home and think over many things. (*He leaves the stage from the garden gate.*)

(*The curtain falls.*)

Act II

Scene I

Two rooms in the hospital—a wall separates them but there is a door between them. Two thirds of the stage on the left side represents the room adjoining **Viva**'s *bedroom. There are five chairs in this room.* **Viva**'s *bedroom occupies one third of the stage on the right. It contains the bed and a chair beside the bed. The door between the two rooms can be opened and closed.*

TIME: *It is night. The dim light in* **Viva**'s *room shows that he is asleep. The other room is dark.*

The movement of light flashing and disappearing suggests his dreaming. The sound of music expresses disharmony. A deformed shape appears in the dim light.

Viva: (*scared*) Who are you?
Death: I am Death.
Viva: What do you want?
Death: I am waiting for you.
Viva: Why?
Death: It is time you would come to my realm . . . to join the others who came before you.
Viva: What is in your realm?
Death: Are you afraid?
Viva: I want to know.
Death: Some call me the "silent world."

Viva: Get away from me. (**Death** *laughs in a loud, mocking way, while* **Viva** *puts both hands in front of his face.*)

Death: Where else can you go?

Viva: I am not old enough to go to your world.

Death: Men and women of all ages, even children and babies, come to me.

Viva: At least I know the world in which I live . . . I know how to succeed . . . but . . .

Death: Why do you fear me? Don't you fall asleep every night without having this fear? . . . You will suddenly feel unconscious and come to my world.

Viva: I remember what Hamlet said:

"In sleep we dream, but what kind of dreams
do we have in death?"

Death: Exactly! As the evil persons have bad dreams while sleeping, so they will have bad dreams in my realm.

Viva: Don't look at me . . . I fear you.

Death: I look at those who are coming to me. . . . You are coming.

Viva: (*loudly*) No, you are dragging me. (*screams*)

(**Death** *disappears. The* **Nurse** *enters and switches on the light.* **Viva** *is sitting on his bed and gazing at the place where* **Death** *was standing.*)

Nurse: What is wrong, Mr. Coward?

Viva: Where is he? (*He rubs his face, then sighs.*) I had a bad dream.

The Nurse: I'll fetch you a pill to calm you.

Viva: Where are my daughters?

Nurse: (*looks at her watch*) It is still early morning. . . . They will soon come. (*The* **Nurse** *goes out.* **Viva** *again rubs his face and sighs. The* **Nurse** *comes back with the pill and water.* **Viva** *takes the pill and drinks water, then the nurse goes out.*)

Viva: I am facing death by myself.

(**Suzy, Mary** *and* **Jane** *enter.*)

Suzy: Have you enjoyed a sound sleep tonight? (**Viva** *sighs.*)
Jane: Have you slept well? (*He shakes his head.*)
Mary: Have you slept for a long time?
Viva: (*sighing*) I'll sleep for a long . . . long time.
Suzy: Are you tired?
Jane: Didn't you sleep well?
Mary: What is wrong, Uncle?
Viva: Death will take me away from you.
Suzy: You used to tell us before . . . business takes me away from you. . . . Now . . . (*She seems suffocated.*)
Viva: Now what, Suzy?
Suzy: We are now penniless.
Viva: You mean the fire. . . . It caused great losses but I still have a lot of money.
Jane: But you gave it to Reta.
Viva: She will only execute my will.
Suzy: Why don't you trust us?
Jane: Why do you consider us as babies?
Viva: You have no experience in life.
Suzy: I know all types of men.
Viva: That doesn't mean you can rely on yourself.
Mary: (*looks at her watch*) Excuse me, Uncle. . . . I am going to work. . . . I have come to see you. . . .
Viva: Thank you, Mary. . . . You can go now.

(**Mary** *leaves while* **Harry** *and* **Dick** *enter together.*)

Viva: You are friendly now?
Dick: In order to cooperate.
Viva: In a plot or in something good?
Harry: The plot is for our good.
Viva: That is nice. (*seems to be suffering*)
Suzy: What is wrong with you, Dad?
Viva: I want to go to the restroom. (*He hurries and sits in the chair with wheels while* **Suzy** *fetches the* **Nurse.** *The* **Nurse** *pushes the chair out of the room.*)

Dick: We have to do something to make him change his will.
Suzy: We don't know what is written in the will.
Jane: Didn't he say that Reta will only execute the will?
Suzy: Yes, he did.
Jane: So the money is still ours.

(**Dick** *looks outside from time to time to make sure that* **Viva** *is not back yet.*)

Dick *and* **Harry:** Are you sure?
Jane: I think so.
Suzy: I am not sure.
Dick: So we must do something.
Jane: Like what?
Dick: Ask him to show us the will.
Suzy: How can we ask him to do so?
Harry: He is not in the mood to listen to us.
Suzy: Let's talk to him after the operation.
Dick: We all know that the operation is dangerous.
Harry: Do you think that he left you enough money?
Jane: What do you mean?
Harry: (*pleased*) The fire destroyed the factory completely.
Suzy: Are you pleased when you tell us so?
Harry: (*realizes his wrong behavior*) I didn't mean to hurt your feelings . . . but I am afraid that Reta is a mysterious woman.
Dick: (*looks suspiciously at* **Harry**) You know secrets that we don't know?
Harry: (*confused*) No . . . I don't know anything.
Suzy: You seem to know something.
Harry: No . . . I am not sure of what I heard.
Jane: (*eager to know*) What did you hear?
Harry: Please . . . don't insist.
Dick: We do insist on knowing.
Harry: It was only a rumour. . . .
Suzy: Do tell us what is it about?
Harry: Peter is Viva's son.
Jane: Do we have a brother?

Suzy: From where did you hear that rumour?

Harry: When I was about to leave this room yesterday and I was alone . . . the nurse came and said that someone called Peter came and wanted to see his father, "Mr. Viva Coward," but he wanted to get permission and he wanted me to ask Mr. Viva to allow him to visit him.

Dick: And what did you do?

Harry: I said that "I don't interfere in family affairs."

Suzy: Why did he want you to do so?

Harry: I don't know.

Jane: (*to* **Dick**) Did he ask you to do the same favor?

Dick: (*confused*) Is this a favor? . . . Why does he need to ask me? . . . Why doesn't he meet his father at once? (*The* **Nurse** *enters to make the bed.*)

Suzy: (*to the* **Nurse**) Please . . . when did Mr. Peter meet you?

Harry: She isn't the nurse who met me yesterday. . . .

Jane: Is it the nurse who pushed Dad's chair?

Harry: No . . . I haven't seen her here before.

(*The two girls look at each other.* **Dick** *looks outside another time.*)

Dick: Stop talking. . . . He is coming. (*They keep silent until* **Viva** *comes and lies in bed.*)

Harry: We were talking about you.

Viva: What is the topic you were talking about?

Dick: Your fear of death.

Jane: He means your sufferings.

Viva: For the first time . . . I feel that people share each other's sufferings.

Dick: We are affected by your condition.

Harry: Without you we would be penniless.

Viva: (*looking at* **Harry**) Your talk is not consistent. . . . You seem to have talked on different subjects.

Suzy: Yes . . . but all of them are about you. . . . We want you to get married to Reta.

Viva: (*to* **Harry**) Did you tell them my secret?

Harry: No, they could guess it. . . . I only said that all your money will go to Reta, and they concluded that you

would . . . marry . . . her. . . . But I didn't reveal your secret directly.

Viva: (*turning his face towards* **Harry**) They concluded . . . eh! They concluded . . . Thank you for keeping my secret hidden.

Suzy: It is no longer a secret.

Viva: So let us discuss it openly.

Jane: It isn't the right time for discussion. You should rest, Dad.

Viva: Thank you, Jane. (*He lies in bed instead of sitting in the chair. His daughters help him.*) I am pleased to be here in hospital.

Harry: How is that?

Viva: Because my daughters are beside me.

Dick: And your sons are also beside you. (*pointing to himself and* **Harry**) Believe me . . . we love you.

Viva: Why do you say "believe me."

Harry: Because we are telling the truth.

Viva: The truth will be clear one day.

Suzy: (*to* **Viva**) You ask me why I hate people?

Viva: Yes, I am uneasy about that.

Suzy: Because people are hypocritical, filthy, dirty, and evil. . . . I feel suffocated. . . . I want (*thrilled*) to breathe fresh air. (*Putting her hand on her throat, she goes out.*)

Harry: The strange behavior suddenly comes to her.

Viva: Has this happened in the past?

Harry: It has happened many times. . . . Many friends of mine say that she is insane.

Viva: (*angrily*) Why do you want to marry an insane girl?

Harry: As she is your daughter; you can make her sane.

Viva: Go and find her . . . look after her.

(**Harry** *goes out.* **Viva** *seems to be suffering.*)

Jane: How do you feel now, Dad?

Viva: Call for the nurse. I want to go to the restroom. (**Jane** *leaves the room.*) Dick, I want to have a long talk with you.

Dick: (*confused*) Is there anything wrong, Dad?

(**Jane** *comes back with the* **Nurse,** *who pushes* **Viva**'*s chair with wheels.*)

Jane: (*looks at* **Dick,** *who seems confused*) Did Dad tell you anything?
Dick: (*still confused*) About what?
Jane: Why are you confused?
Dick: Oh! Nothing.
Jane: You seem to be hiding a secret.
Dick: Why don't you trust me, Jane? (**Dan** *enters the room and they stop talking.*)
Dan: Where is Mr. Coward?
Jane: He went again to the restroom.
Dan: It is a psychological state. . . . He is truly worried.
Jane: Is it a dangerous operation?
Dan: It is an operation.
Jane: Is it simple or dangerous? (**Dan** *looks at her and doesn't answer.*) Then it is dangerous.
Dan: It depends . . .
Dick: On what? . . . Tell me, please. I am really worried. . . . He is in danger, isn't he?
Dan: (*seems not eager to answer*) Well. . . . Don't talk now . . . he may come at any moment.
Jane: You are right. . . . We shouldn't talk about the operation here. (**Suzy** *and* **Harry** *come back.*) You shouldn't leave Daddy and . . . (*The phone rings.*)
Dan: (*lifting the receiver*) Hullo, this is the hospital. . . . Mr. Coward? (*He gives the receiver to* **Jane** *and* **Suzy** *comes near her. Meanwhile* **Dan** *goes out.*)
Jane: Oh, yes. I am his daughter. . . . What? (*Her face turns white. She listens and puts down the receiver.*)
Suzy: What is wrong?
Jane: A policeman says that our uncle took poison and he wants to see his brother before his death!
Dick: How can we tell Dad of that?
Harry: How can Dad go there?

Jane: They will carry my uncle to this hospital . . . to see his brother, and they will try to save him here.

Suzy: How can Daddy bear this shock, too?

Harry: Let's go to the entrance to prevent them from bringing Uncle Richard from coming to see Dad.

Jane, Suzy *and* **Dick:** That's the best idea. (*They all go out. The telephone rings again. Then the* **Nurse** *enters with* **Viva** *on the moving chair.*)

Viva: (*lifting the receiver*) Hullo. . . . Oh, yes. . . . Viva is talking. . . . Who? Ann? Why do you want to meet me urgently? Please, Ann, leave me alone. . . . Don't I send you money? . . . Of course . . . I am worried. . . . I'll have an operation and I may die . . . you can say I'll certainly die . . . but I deceive myself and say there may be hope. (*listens for three minutes, then he says*) Okay. Come with your son. (*He puffs the air nervously while putting down the receiver.*)

Nurse: Don't upset yourself, sir.

Viva: I don't upset myself . . . others drive me mad. . . . Where are my daughters?

Nurse: I don't know, sir . . . I was pushing your chair.

Viva: Okay, please try to find them. . . . I want them to be near me before my death.

Nurse: Don't be a pessimist!

Viva: Am I going to a dancing hall?

Nurse: I know that it is an operation.

Viva: And do you know what kind of operation? . . . They will cut my skull open . . . and . . . (**Ann** *enters with* **Peter,** *her son, so he says to the* **Nurse**) Leave us alone, please. (*The* **Nurse** *leaves.*) Yes, Ann?

Ann: Don't be impatient, please. . . . I must tell you what you don't know. . . . Here is your son.

Viva: (*surprised*) My son? What did you say?

Ann: It is the truth. . . . I knew none except you during the five years before you travelled to Europe for a year.

Viva: Why didn't you tell me that before?

Ann: Because I feared that you would stop paying me money . . . so I didn't mention it to you.

Viva: Do you think I'll believe you?

Ann: You are always suspicious. . . . But whether you believe it or not, I must tell you now.

Viva: Why do you tell me now? Isn't it enough I gave him a job because of you? Isn't it enough I gave him a higher salary, which is more than he deserves? Isn't it enough that I didn't stop paying you?

Ann: You don't pay me out of charity. You give me money in return for your pleasure.

Viva: And what do you want now?

Ann: You should give him his share of your money. . . . Your son has the same right as your daughters.

Viva: Do you want to blackmail me, Ann? . . . (*His daughters come. To his daughters*) Where have you been?

Jane *and* **Suzy:** (*perplexed*) We . . . We . . .

Viva: We . . . what? Is there a secret you want to hide from me?

Suzy: No. . . . We went to say good-bye to our fiancés.

Viva: Can't they sit near me in time of danger?

Jane: We asked them to leave now. . . . We want to be alone with you.

(**Jane** *and* **Suzy** *look at* **Peter** *and* **Ann.**)

Viva: I want those who really love me.

Ann: Think . . . Viva . . . and have a clear conscience.

Viva: It is nice of you to talk about conscience. . . . Go now, Ann . . . and I'll ring you up later.

(**Ann** *and* **Peter** *leave without saying good-bye. They don't turn around, but walk straight.*)

Suzy: Who is this woman?

Viva: She's Peter's mother. . . . He is one of my employees. . . . You used to see him bringing me papers at home to be signed.

Jane: Do employees bring their mothers to visit you?

Viva: This is a cunning question. . . . (*He wants to change the subject.*) By the way . . . I want to ask you both . . . an important question.

Suzy *and* **Jane:** What's it?

Viva: What are your real feelings toward your fiancés?

Suzy: In fact, Dad . . . I don't know.

Viva: You always . . . don't know what you want.

Suzy: I have never felt the family bonds. . . . Our home is exactly a small picture of our torn society.

Viva: (*seems pensive*) You . . . are . . . right . . . Suzy. I failed as a father. . . . You were brought up nearly as orphans . . . even when your mother was still alive.

Suzy: You were always quarreling and neglecting us . . . saying, "We give you your freedom."

Viva: But we gave you complete freedom.

Jane: It was negligence. . . . We didn't get this feeling of belongingness. . . . We wanted to ask your advice . . . mother's advice . . . but both of you were busy.

Viva: I wanted to make money for you.

Suzy: And mother was busy making parties for her friends.

Viva: This is social relation.

Jane: And what about family relations? . . . What about kid's rights?

Suzy: I ask myself why I have this ambivalence in my attitude toward everything. I can't find an answer. . . . When you make jokes, calling me Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde . . . I become annoyed . . . but I don't know why. . . . I need Henry's help, indeed.

Viva: So go to his clinic regularly. . . . Don't do as my brother did. (*The girls look at each other.*)

Jane: What did your brother do?

Viva: Don't you know? (*The girls look at each other again.*)

Suzy: Did anyone tell you?

Viva: Yes, Henry himself did. (*Both girls look again and keep their breath.*) He complained that he didn't go to his clinic regularly. . . . So . . .

Jane: So what?

Viva: Of course . . . I don't expect that he will improve. . . . You notice that he didn't visit me all last week. . . . (*Both girls sigh.*)

Suzy: Maybe he was busy.

Viva: Busy? He is a strange fellow! He asks for money, then he says I don't need anyone's help. . . . (*He thinks for a while.*) I want to know where he is now. . . . I have really missed him. . . . I want him beside me. . . . I had only two brothers . . . one dead and the other is not normal. . . . Yet I love him . . . and want him to be beside me in time of danger.

Suzy: You don't know his address?

Viva: He doesn't have a permanent address. . . . (*He thinks.*) He visited Henry five days ago.

Suzy: I'll ask Henry if he has his last address.

Viva: (*to* **Jane**) What about your fiancé, Jane?

Jane: I don't understand Dick and I think he doesn't understand me, either. . . . He doesn't even care to understand me.

Viva: This is something serious. . . . Why don't you tell me?

Jane: You were always too busy to sit with us to listen to our problems.

Viva: (*nodding slowly*) You are . . . right . . . Jane. . . . I should be a father . . . not a tool that makes a fortune.

Suzy: It is not the right time to talk about our problems.

Viva: No, Suzy. . . . I am pleased now that you tell me about your problems. . . . I have to share your troubles and problems and to try to solve them.

Jane: But you need rest now.

Viva: My rest lies in having all your problems solved. . . . Who else can look after you? (*He seems absent-minded.*) I am leaving the world with many problems unsolved . . . but you can ask Reta's help. . . . She is a true and faithful friend.

Jane: You never mentioned her before.

Viva: Because, as you said . . . I was not near you . . . I only attended your physical needs . . . neglecting the important needs.

Suzy: What are they?

Viva: As Henry always says . . . the psychological and spiritual needs.

Suzy: For the first time . . . I feel I am in the presence of my father. (*She goes to him and kisses him.*) I love you, Father. (**Jane** *goes to him and kisses him, too.*)

Viva: (*weeping*) I feel that it is the farewell kiss . . . the last kiss in my life.

Suzy *and* **Jane:** (*together*) Don't say so, Father. . . . We must have hope. . . . Life without hope is nothing but death.

Viva: Sometimes we say the words without feeling their meanings. . . . Sometimes we feel every word . . . it has a meaning . . . it affects us. . . . Now the words "life" and "death" are not just uttered words, like all the words we say every day. . . . Now I feel the meaning of death . . . the meaning of life.

Jane: Some people say death in life . . . others say life in death . . . but most people seem to be unaware of each.

Suzy: Sometimes I feel I want to die.

Viva: (*surprised*) What did you say, Suzy? You are young . . . you shouldn't get that feeling.

Suzy: And sometimes I want to live forever . . . sometimes I feel that I want to weep . . . sometimes I feel as gay as a baby. . . . I don't understand myself.

Viva: One important piece of advice for both of you: Love each other. . . . Love is a blessing, indeed. . . . I don't want this moment to come to an end because I am with my daughters, who love me and whom I love. . . . (*They kiss him again for a long time. . . . They all weep. Then* **Harry** *and* **Dick** *come hurriedly and they seem troubled.*)

Suzy: What is wrong?

Harry: We couldn't convince them . . . to prevent him from meeting . . . Dad.

Dick: They said, "It is a dying man's wish."

Viva: (*looks easy*) What are you talking about? (*Two* **Male Nurses** *enter, carrying* **Richard** *on a stretcher.*) Why are you carrying him on a stretcher?

Male Nurses: (*together*) He took poison.

Viva: (*to* **Richard**) Why have you done so?
Richard: I don't know. . . . I hate life.
Viva: So you destroy yourself?
Richard: I am already destroyed. . . . Life has no meaning. . . . Life is tasteless. Life is a big torture to me.
Viva: You don't understand life.
Richard: Do you understand life?
Viva: I don't know . . . but I want to live.
Richard: Maybe because you have kids and fortune. . . . But I have neither kids nor fortune.
Viva: You have yourself.
Richard: I have never found myself. . . . Look . . . (*stares in a direction*) He is always tempting me to get rid of myself.
Viva: That's Satan. . . . Don't follow him. . . . I'll give you half of my fortune.
Richard: (*looks at the* **Male Nurses**) Tell him that . . . I am only alive for a few minutes.
Viva: (*to the* **Nurses**) Can't you save him?
Male Nurses: Let's move quickly. (*to* **Viva**) We'll try.
Viva: (*when they leave the stage*) I'll give you a big reward. (*They look at each other, speechless. Then* **Richard**'s *mistress comes running.*)
Betty: Where's Richard?
Viva: What happened?
Betty: He took "cyanamide." (*She seems dizzy and about to fall.* **Suzy** *helps her to keep standing.*)
Viva: What? So . . . all hope is lost.
Betty: (*crying*) I killed him. . . . I am a criminal.
Viva: Did you put the poison in his food?
Betty: No . . . he himself took the poison . . . then he called me up.
Viva: Why did he take it?
Betty: When he insulted me . . . I called him a "failure" and left. (*She sits down in a chair.*) Then he took the poison and called me up, saying . . . (*she is crying*) "You won't find me again to call me a failure." (*in a hysterical way*) I want to see him. . . . I want to apologize.

Viva: Will he come back to life when you apologize?
Betty: I was a fool. . . . (*still crying*) I destroyed him.
Viva: Who are you?
Betty: I am his love.
Viva: Does a woman who loves destroy her lover?
Betty: I am a fool. . . . I'll go with him. (*She stands suddenly and runs.*)
Viva: Let's all go with her to see (*weeping*) my dear brother for the last time. (*Sound of slow, sad music.*)

(*The curtain falls.*)

Scene II

The same two rooms in the hospital. **Viva** *is sleeping in his room.* **Dick** *is sitting in the adjoining room.* **Dan** *enters* **Viva***'s room first, looks at him.* **Viva***'s snoring shows that he is fast asleep. Then, without any noise, he enters to meet* **Dick**.

Dan: (*in a low voice*) He's fast asleep.
Dick: And we want him to sleep forever.
Dan: Isn't he your father-in-law?
Dick: He's my enemy first.
Dan: How's that?
Dick: He's my uncle's enemy.
Dan: Why?
Dick: There is competition between them.
Dan: And?
Dick: My uncle has no heir except me.
Dan: I don't understand.
Dick: If we destroy Viva, our sales will increase.
Dan: Can't you increase your sales without killing him?
Dick: No . . . because he reduces the price to attract customers . . . thus causing us great losses.

Dan: So it is a fight between you and your uncle on one side and Viva on the other side.

Dick: Now you understand it.

Dan: What I don't understand is your relation with his daughter.

Dick: It is a part of the plot. . . . I'll explain it to you another time.

Dan: So you don't love her.

Dick: In fact, I don't know. . . . She deserves to be loved . . . but . . . this is another point . . . I may be in love with her. . . . Indeed . . . I love her.

Dan: So why do you want to see her father dead?

Dick: I want her . . . but not her father.

Dan: Won't you feel guilty when you kill her father?

Dick: Do the soldiers feel guilty when they kill the enemies?

Dan: War is the worst experience that man has. . . . We become animals in war, killing each other.

Dick: Now there is a war between us and Viva.

Dan: I don't see it that way.

Dick: Because you don't know that he destroyed all the other competitors . . . and we only are resisting.

Dan: Did he kill any? Did he set fire to any factory?

Dick: No . . . but he got the same result. . . . The other factory owners now join us in our plot. . . . They want to take revenge.

Dan: But the case is different for you. . . . You will be his son-in-law.

Dick: I don't care about that. . . . My "First Big Aim" is to get rid of Viva. . . . My relation with his daughter is one of the means to enter his house and to carry out our plot successfully. . . . Have you forgotten that I brought you?

Dan: What's in that? Isn't he a patient like any other patient?

Dick: For you, yes . . . but for me, I want to know everything about his health.

Dan: I don't understand?

Dick: A friend of mine knew that his enemy used to complain of high blood pressure. . . . He was able to put pills in the

same bottle to make his case worse. . . . So I am doing a similar job.

Dan: I understood that you were an opportunist who wanted to marry a rich girl . . . but I didn't imagine that you were planning something.

Dick: Well, never mind about that. . . . Don't discuss now. . . . I was about to forget what I came for.

Dan: What is it?

Dick: My uncle finds that we now have a better chance than just trying to shoot him. . . . Twice he was saved. (**Dan** *is amazed.*) Don't be surprised . . . these are the rules of fighting.

Dan: Why do you tell me so?

Dick: Because you will help us. . . . My uncle will give you a big reward—and, of course, the other doctors who will help you.

Dan: Are we to shoot Mr. Coward? (*He looks surprised.*)

Dick: Oh, no . . . your knife doesn't make any sound and it will do the same job.

Dan: Are we going to kill him with a knife? Then we are arrested and put in jail?

Dick: No, no, no. . . . Your knife during the operation will have a wonderful effect!

Dain: (*sits down and looks astounded*) This is a crime, Dick.

Dick: No, it isn't. . . . The operation is dangerous . . . and its failure is expected. . . . What do you say?

(**Dan** *is speechless but we hear what goes on in his mind:"Am I to commit a crime? Oh, no . . . but it will be considered 'fate.' . . . If I accept . . . I can ask for a big sum. . . . "*)

Dan: Let me ask you this: How much will you pay?

Dick: (*smiling*) I was sure that you would accept. . . . Come and meet my uncle and he will give you an advance. . . . But remember, Dan . . . If anyone finds that you betray us . . . they *shall* shoot you. . . . Remember this . . . these are the rules of our game.

Dan: What do you mean by "betray"?
Dick: By telling Viva or the police.
Dan: Am I a fool?
Dick: No, of course . . . but I only remind you.
Dan: I hope the surgeon will agree.
Dick: He will agree . . . the "smell of money" turns any head.
Dan: You are sure of your weapons.
Dick: Of course! People are ready to kill each other because of money.
Dan: You know more about people than I do.
Dick: You only study diseases and fight diseases. . . . It is a small battle . . . but my battle is fighting bigger germs.
Dan: What do you mean by "bigger germs"?
Dick: People whom I want to get rid of.
Dan: Well, prepare your money and I'll visit your uncle. . . . Give me his address.
Dick: Everything is prepared. . . . I wrote it on this paper. (*He gives him the paper and* **Dan** *leaves. After a minute* **Dick** *knocks on* **Viva**'*s door.*)
Viva: (*opens his eyes*) Who is it?
Dick: It is Dick. . . . I came on time, but you were still asleep . . . so I have been waiting for half an hour.
Viva: Thank you, Dick, for coming. . . . Is there anyone with you?
Dick: You asked me to come alone.
Viva: Yes, because I want to have a long talk with you. . . . Come and sit down.
Dick: Are you all right now?
Viva: No, I am not. . . . I know that I have a few hours to live.
Dick: Don't lose hope. . . . You are not the first to have an operation.
Viva: How do you feel when you meet your enemy?
Dick: I can't bear to see him.
Viva: This is normal . . . but as for me, I see things differently. . . . You know what I want to do?
Dick: No, I don't . . . but I think you want to kill your enemy before he kills you.
Viva: (*smiles*) I hate to kill any man.

Dick: Even your enemy?
Viva: I want to meet those who consider themselves my enemy. . . .
Dick: Do you know them?
Viva: I don't . . .
Dick: How do you meet them if you don't know them?
Viva: Of course, I don't have any chance . . . but I want to tell them that life is happy with love . . . why don't we all live happily.
Dick: Well . . . and . . . (*He doesn't know what to say.*)
Viva: Have you read this book? (*He shows him a book.*) I read in it all that is said about death.
Dick: What is the benefit of that?
Viva: Death is a teacher.
Dick: Is it a philosophical book?
Viva: You didn't ask me why.
Dick: Why?
Viva: Because it is a good lesson for all human beings.
Dick: What is the lesson in death?
Viva: I didn't ask myself, "Where do we go after death?" but now this is my sole concern.
Dick: I dislike talking about death. . . . Let's talk about the pleasures of life.
Viva: Wait, dear . . . I want to open to you my heart and to tell you what goes on in my mind.
Dick: Concerning what?
Viva: Concerning everything. . . . I'll have another long talk with Harry. . . . Because you are now my sons, aren't you?
Dick: Yes, we are. . . . We love you as our . . . father.
Viva: I am pleased to hear this. . . . I want to ask you frankly and I want you to answer me frankly.
Dick: Of course, we are frank with you.
Viva: You know my enemies . . .
Dick: (*interrupting*) No, I don't know them.
Viva: Why do you interrupt me? . . . I haven't finished my sentence.
Dick: (*a bit nervous*) I am sorry . . . I thought you were asking me.

Viva: You know my enemies wish to see me dead.

Dick: Maybe you are right.

Viva: But I don't have the same thinking. . . . This week I have learnt a lot. . . . I see people as prey to trivial wishes. . . . Life, as Thackeray considered it, is a "vanity fair."

Dick: I read *Vanity Fair* and enjoyed it.

Viva: Have you realized the vanity of human wishes?

Dick: Well . . . yes . . . and what is the relation between your enemies and the vanity of human wishes?

Viva: They have the same trivial wishes. . . . I'm going to die during the operation or without the operation . . . I may have a sudden heart attack . . . so why do they try to kill me?

Dick: I don't know.

Viva: I know that you don't know . . . but I'll tell you the lesson I learnt and I'll tell it to all the others . . . then you will ask me why?

Dick: We will ask you why?

Viva: I want you to get rid of such trivial wishes in all your attitudes toward things.

Dick: Do you suspect anything?

Viva: Not only suspect, I am quite sure.

Dick: Of what?

Viva: Your silly mistakes. . . . You should build your life on solid ground. . . . Love doesn't come by itself. . . . We bring it and we keep it strong always.

Dick: Have you read also about love in this book?

Viva: In this book and other books . . . and I know it in life.

Dick: Be sure we love you and I love Jane and she loves me.

Viva: So you solve all your problems with the help of love.

Dick: Be sure! Dad . . . I love you more than you imagine.

Viva: And I want you to love my daughter in order to make her happy. . . . One day, you will be a father and you will understand why I asked you to have a long talk with me. (**Reta** *arrives carrying a bunch of roses.*) Will you put roses on my tomb, Reta?

Reta: (*encouragingly*) Don't lose hope. . . . Don't talk about death now.

(**Suzy, Jane,** *and* **Mary** *arrive.*)

Viva: Why not? Look at your face. . . . Look at their faces. . . . They tell of death.
Reta: Let's talk about the future.
Viva: What future? I'll soon be past. . . . Put white flowers because they express sincerity.
Dick: White flowers are rare.
Viva: (*looking at him*) Are we losing or winning?
Dick: We will miss you . . . I mean . . . we will lose you. . . .
Viva: But you will win a lot of money.
Dick: Money is not everything.
Viva: (*nodding sarcastically*) Indeed, Dick.
Dick: We all love you, Viva. (*He says it in the way it is said in demonstrations, then he signals to the others to repeat after him and they all shout out after him.*) We all love you, Viva.
Viva: (*weeps*) But I have to walk alone through the path to death, don't I, Reta?
Reta: Only our deeds go with us. (**Suzy** *comes near him.*)
Suzy: Father . . . don't torture us with these words.
Dick: It is a simple operation. . . . We need your smile and courage.
Viva: I envy those who face death with courage. . . . Why do we dream? What is the relationship between our conscious state and our subconscious mind?

(**Jack** *arrives.*)

Jack: How are you now, Viva?
Viva: Ask how I'll be after an hour or two.
Jack: Have they fixed the time of the operation?
Viva: (*contemplating*) Say they have sharpened the knife that puts an end to my life.

Dick: (*smiling in affectation*) You are joking even in time of trouble. (*The others look serious. They look at him resentfully, so he stops laughing.*)

Mary: As Christ overcame death, so there is no fear of death.

Jack: What do you say, Mary?

Viva: (*to* **Mary**) Come, Mary . . . tell me what relieves my soul. . . . (*contemplating*) Why do we fear death?

Dick: Are you afraid? We are with you. (*He signals to the others and they repeat with him.*) We are with you.

Viva: (*looks at* **Dick**) Can you walk with me . . .

Dick: Of course. (**Reta** *points to her watch, waves good-bye, and leaves.*)

Viva: In the shadow of death?

Dick: (*stammering*) W . . . w . . . i . . . ll . . . Y . . . Y . . . yes.

Viva: You too fear death.

Dick: Let's talk about something better. . . . I'll tell you a joke . . . in order to smile.

Viva: Okay, Dick.

Dick: A man saved for ten years to marry a woman he wanted. . . . He gave her the money as a present. . . . She took the money and married another man. (**Dick** *laughs, but none of the others laughs.*)

Viva: (*nodding his head*) That's evil life, as we see it.

Jack: It is not time to contemplate. . . . Be practical.

Viva: How, Jack?

Jack: Arrange for everything . . . and then have the operation.

Viva: Is it a meal to enjoy, Jack?

Jack: It is as any human activity . . . a physical activity.

Viva: I would like to see you facing death as I do now.

Jack: What is death? . . . It is the end of life cycle, according to biology.

Viva: And that's all . . . no effect . . . no fear . . . no feeling . . . no contemplation.

Jack: Well . . . there's no need for that.

Viva: Jack. . . . You are a moving machine.

Dick: He is not moving. . . . He is standing still.

Suzy: (*to* **Dick**) Are you joking in an awful situation?
Dick: To relieve your father's soul.
Suzy: You men don't have feelings.
Dick: Don't we? We have more mature feelings than you women.
Suzy: I don't think so. . . . No man is worthy of trust . . . they are all animals.
Jack: All human beings . . . men and women are animals.
Viva: (*satirically*) According to biology, Jack! (*to* **Suzy**) Why do you say so, Suzy? (**Henry** *enters.*)
Suzy: I never found the man who is worthy of my love.
Henry: Suzy, be calm now. . . . Dad needs comfort, not tension.

(**Suzy** *leaves the stage.*)

Viva: Haven't you cured her, Doctor?
Henry: Not yet. She needs a long time.
Viva: Please give her more care, Henry.
Henry: She is in an honest hand.
Viva: I am sure. . . . I myself was in need of your help. . . . But oh! Death . . . is in front of me.
Henry: You shouldn't talk of death while going to have an operation.
Viva: Isn't it the truth, Doctor?
Henry: We have to face difficulties with smiles.
Viva: But it is not just a difficulty . . . it is the end.
Henry: No . . . every day people have operations.
Viva: You want to encourage me.
Dick: That's true . . . Uncle Viva. . . . You should have courage to face death.

(*The* **Nurse** *enters.* **Viva** *sits in the moving chair, looks slowly at the face of each of them.* **Mary** *and* **Jane** *kiss him. Music expresses each movement: trouble inside him, slow music while they move slowly, sad music when he is taken away. The light becomes dimmer until he leaves the stage, then it becomes bright again.*)

Jack: (*to* **Dick**) Is he really dying?

(**Dick**'*s gesture shows that he doesn't know.*)

Henry: All of us are going to die, Jack!
Jack: (*stammering*) Y . . . es . . . but it is a bad experience.
Dick: It is the worst experience.

(**Harry** *enters, carrying a tape recorder.*)

Henry: All of us are going
Suzy: Where have you been, Harry?
Harry: I was doing something important. . . . Where is Dad?
Jane: (*weeping*) I am afraid that . . .
Dick: The doctors are doing their duty now. . . .

(*Sad music is heard again.* **Jack** *moves up and down.*)

Jack: Do you hear this sad music? (*He puts his hands on his ears and shouts*) Stop it! . . . Stop it! . . . I can't bear . . . facing death. . . . Indeed . . . I want to die suddenly.

(**Betty** *enters. She is weeping.*)

Betty: (*approaching* **Jack**) Is Viva going to die, too?
Jack: (*looks at her*) How can I know! I hope not.
Betty: Where will we go after death?
Jack: To dust.
Betty: (*still weeping*) Only!
Jack: (*nods*) Only.
Betty: So there is no meaning of life.
Henry: Jack doesn't ask the meaning of anything; he just follows the life cycle.
Jack: (*to* **Henry**) Can you tell me the meaning of life?
Henry: Each person has a meaning that satisfies him. . . . There is a spiritual meaning . . . there is a moral meaning . . . and other philosophical meanings.

Jack: I am a realist.... I don't need metaphysical ideas. I don't read philosophy, either.

Henry: But physics can't answer the questions of meaning . . . as mechanism breaks down at the problem of knowledge.... Man is not only an animal as we see him . . . he has mind and soul as well.

Jack: Where is the soul?

Henry: In man's breath of life . . . in his feelings . . . in his thinking and ideas . . . in his spiritual life . . . and in his hopes.

Jack: Your words are not convincing.

Henry: I noticed that those who visited my clinic . . . could not keep the balance between body and soul.

Dick: Why are you serious, Doctor.... Is it a debate? Let's enjoy our stay.

Suzy: (*annoyed*) Enjoy our stay while Dad is in danger?

(**Dan** *comes hastily. He is upset and annoyed.*)

Dan: (*to* **Dick**) See, Dick! Your father-in-law doesn't trust me after all that I did for him.

Jane: What is wrong?

Dan: (*to* **Jane**) I found a policeman preventing me from being present during the operation.

Dick: How did the policeman . . . (*stops*)

Jack: I did so....

Dan: Did what, sir?

Jack: I asked the police to prevent Dan from . . .

Dan: (*pretending to be angry*) Why? I am his doctor.... I . . .

Jack: It's Viva's desire.

Dan: (*to* **Dick**) After all the services I rendered him.

Dick: There's something strange.... (*to* **Jack**) Why did you tell the police, Mr. Jack?

Jack: You know that Mr. Viva is always suspicious.... He imagines that his enemies want to kill him....

Dan: What have I to do with his enemies?

Jack: Being suspicious . . . he asked the police not to allow

anyone to enter with the surgeon and his trusted nurse. . . . So I asked the police to take these precautions.

Dick: Don't be angry, Dan! He doesn't distrust you in particular.

Jack: That's it, Dan. . . . You are a clever doctor . . . and Viva loves you all.

Betty: The police permitted me to visit Viva in order to ask his forgiveness. . . . I caused a shock to him. . . . I loved Richard . . . but the devil . . .

Henry: (*to* **Betty**) Have you confessed or not?

Betty: You still accuse me, Dr. Henry. . . . I am innocent.

Henry: Don't you feel guilty?

Betty: I am guilty.

Henry: The sense of guilt . . . will haunt you.

Betty: I want to have a clear conscience.

Henry: So go and tell the police about those who planned with you to drive Richard mad.

Betty: (*looking at* **Henry**, *she doesn't talk. She is just weeping.*) Why do you torture me, Doctor?

Henry: It is remorse that tortures you.

(*Suddenly* **Betty** *stands and runs, leaving the stage.*)

Dan: Do you talk to this woman about clear conscience?

Henry: Why not? When conscience awakens . . . I mean when it is not under any effect . . . it tortures us when we are guilty.

Dick: Do you mean that all the criminals have conscience?

Henry: As far as I believe, God puts conscience inside each of us. . . . It is God's voice . . . telling you if you are right or wrong. . . . That's why we see people who repent . . . those who feel at ease when they confess of their crimes. . . .

Jack: Today you are giving us lectures in morals.

Henry: It is just contemplation. . . . We have memory that records everything.

Dick: Some people lose memory.

Henry: When I talk about health . . . don't tell me people become ill. . . . I'm talking about normal people.

Jack: What are you driving at, Henry?

Henry: Well, as our memory keeps everything, so our deeds are recorded. . . . Have you asked yourself why are they recorded?

Mary: For the Doomsday.

Jack: Please stop talking about such things. . . . I can't control my nerves. . . . Look. (*His hands are shivering.*)

Suzy: (*to* **Harry**) Tell me, Harry, where have you been?

Harry: Well, I was with the police.

Dick: You, too?

Harry: Yes, I thought of what the nurse told me about Peter. . . . Why did the nurse . . . tell me? In order to tell you. . . . So we talk to Mr. Coward about his illegitimate son. . . .

Jack: Does Mr. Viva have an illegitimate son?

Harry: I don't know . . . but I guessed that there was a plot against Viva. . . . I went to the police and told them . . . that people used to threaten Viva. . . . The police recorded all the telephone calls. . . . Would you like to hear one of the calls? (*He puts the tape recorder on. All the others listen.*)

Peter's voice: Is it Viva?

Viva's voice: Yes . . . who is speaking?

Peter's voice: Your neglected son. . . . We all know that you will surely die. . . . That's why I don't kill you now. . . . But if you don't die, I'll kill you.

Viva's voice: Why?

Peter's voice: Because you have thrown me to the dust.

Viva's voice: How?

Peter's voice: By depriving me of my rights.

Viva's voice: What rights are you talking about?

Peter's voice: The rights of a son.

Viva's voice: You are not my son.

Peter's voice: I am. . . . I am. . . . I am.

Viva's voice: How can you prove this?

Peter's voice: My mother tells me so.

Viva's voice: How can I be convinced of her story?

Peter's voice: You want only your pleasures, but you don't care about the consequences.

Viva's voice: You talk about a past history which is finished.

Peter's voice: But I am its continuation. . . . The past is not dead . . . it is still alive.

Viva's voice: I don't know you. . . .

Peter's voice: Okay. When you find the bullet through your heart . . . you'll know me. . . . I want to tell you something else . . . as you destroyed my mother . . . I destroyed your factory.

Viva's voice: So . . . you are the criminal. . . . The fire was not an accident.

Peter's voice: You are also a criminal. . . . You have to pay for your crimes.

(**Harry** *turns the tape recorder off.*)

Jack: Well done, Harry. . . . Your behavior shows that you are a true man. . . . You are worthy of trust.

Suzy: I am uneasy about Dad. . . . Let's go and stand near his door. (*They leave the stage one by one and the curtain falls.*)

Act III

Place: The same place as in Act I.
Time: Morning.

(**Jane** *and* **Suzy** *are sitting together. They seem worried.*)

Jane: At last the nightmare is over.
Suzy: What do you mean by "nightmare"?
Jane: Father being exposed to danger.
Suzy: He is all right.
Jane: He doesn't believe that he is safe. . . . He seems stunned most of the time.
Suzy: It was a hard experience for him.
Jane: Of course. . . . Facing death . . . and knowing the danger of the case . . . and waiting. . . . All these are more destructive and tension causing than death itself.
Suzy: I wish I would suddenly die without any precautions . . . all of a sudden I die, without torture or tension.
Jane: Me too. . . . I don't even want to lie in bed with people around me to serve me.
Suzy: Some people say that they prefer to live sick than die. . . . They "love life."
Jane: And some people commit suicide . . . leaving this evil world while they are healthy and strong.
Suzy: Why do you say "our evil world"?
Jane: Because it is evil.

Suzy: Would you rather be living in the age of Romeo and Juliet or our age now?

Jane: (*thinking deeply*) I think that people in the past were more humanitarian than people nowadays.

Suzy: Aren't people the same in all ages?

Jane: The environment has its effect. . . . People's beliefs and thoughts have their effect. . . . Their needs differ.

Suzy: It seems that you are reading new books.

Jane: Yes, when I think of life nowadays and what I read from previous ages . . . I feel disgusted.

Suzy: Disgusted! Why! Now you have all means of luxury. . . . Life has become so easy that you don't feel tired.

Jane: If you mean by "feeling tired" . . . the physical efforts, because the machine does everything, I agree . . . but I feel tired of life . . . tired of people. . . . Some values are missing.

Suzy: You seem to be repeating Henry's words.

Jane: Why do you mention Henry now?

Suzy: Because he told me that the values for me are not deeply rooted . . . and that is the main cause of my trouble.

Jane: You remember what Dad used to say about "psychiatrists" . . .

Suzy: No . . . I don't remember what he said.

Jane: He said that psychiatrists are more than physicians nowadays.

Suzy: And what in that?

Jane: Mental disorder and psychic disturbances are more than physical illness.

Suzy: That is true . . . but why, Jane?

Jane: Our materialistic world. . . . We don't know whether Adam is our father or we are the descendants of apes.

Suzy: Some people believe that we are only animals.

Jane: Some people behave as animals. . . . They want to satisfy their physical needs only.

Suzy: Again you utter Henry's words.

Jane: I have read this week many books about psychology, about culture, and about religions.

Suzy: Why are you reading these subjects now?

Jane: Well, Dad's experience made me think. . . . What is life? Is there a life after death or do we just die? By the way . . . I forgot to tell you that I read a book about parapsychology.

Suzy: Oh, Jane, you will be educated.

Jane: All of us should be educated. We should look around us . . . look inside ourselves. . . .

Suzy: (*interrupting*) "Inside ourselves" is Henry's phrase too, isn't it?

Jane: I told you I am reading books about psychology.

Suzy: What idea . . . I mean general idea about man . . . do you have now?

Jane: Man's self is neglected because of lack of values and morals.

Suzy: I need to know more about the world . . . sometimes I feel I am childish. . . . Any word of praise is all that I want to hear.

Jane: You want to hear that you are beautiful and attractive.

Suzy: Don't you want to hear the same words?

Jane: Now . . . I want to be called cultured and intelligent. . . .

Suzy: You seem to me now a different Jane.

Jane: Don't we become mature! Are we going to continue to be the same babies?

Suzy: We aren't babies, Jane.

Jane: As long as our thinking doesn't develop, we are babies.

Suzy: How can we develop our thinking?

Jane: By reading useful books, not just having trivial dancing parties . . . and talking in trivial matters.

Suzy: Aren't you satisfied with our lives?

Jane: In fact, no. . . . I wish I were living in the age of true feelings, sincerity and love.

Suzy: Don't we have these now?

Jane: Some people—or, say, a few people—keep these principles . . . but . . . many people are after lust, cheating, hypocrisy . . . and evil purposes.

Suzy: You seem to be unhappy with our society.

Jane: Not only our society. . . . Man in the twentieth century is destroying himself, his history, and his culture.

Suzy: Who do we blame?

Jane: We blame all those who lead humanity to anarchism . . . those who don't help man to reserve his values represented in morals.

Suzy: You seem to be giving me a lecture.

Jane: I was just thinking and meditating. . . . I wish I had a Romeo and I would be his Juliet.

Suzy: Oh! This shows you are not convinced with Dick.

Jane: Of course. . . . He can't be my future husband who gives me warmth and a feeling of security.

Suzy: Look! Dan is coming. (*She points. Then* **Dan** *arrives.*) Hullo, Dan.

Dan: How is Dad now?

Suzy: I think he is all right. . . . Why haven't you visited us for a long time?

Dan: I was busy. . . . Would you tell Dad that I am here? (*Both girls nod and go inside the house. Then* **Viva** *arrives in his wheelchair. He has bandages on his head.*)

Viva: Nice to see you again!

Dan: I am sorry. . . . I had to be away from the house. . . . I mean I shouldn't be seen visiting you. . . .

Viva: Why? And I wanted to ask you why you asked me to let Jack tell the police to prevent you from attending the operation.

Dan: That's for your good and my good, too.

Viva: You promised to explain later . . . and now I am eager to know your explanation.

Dan: There was a plot against you . . . and there is still the plot. . . . That's why I come to warn you. . . .

Viva: What was the plot?

Dan: Will you promise not to tell the police . . . at least now?

Viva: Is it important not to tell the police?

Dan: Yes . . . because if the enemies know . . . they will kill me. . . . That's why I wanted you—through Mr. Jack and the police—to prevent me from taking part in the

crime. . . . In other words . . . we thus prevented the crime.

Viva: I still don't understand anything.

Dan: Will you promise not to tell the police?

Viva: I promise.

Dan: And I promise to cooperate with you till we put an end to the plot. . . .

Viva: Thank you. . . . Please explain to me.

Dan: The plot was to kill you during the operation, and it would seem natural that the operation failed.

Viva: What a dirty deed!

Dan: And I was promised a big reward.

Viva: And?

Dan: My conscience arose in anger. . . . Am I to be a paid criminal? Am I to betray the honor of our sacred job?

Viva: (*pats his shoulder*) Thank you, Dan. . . . You are a good man, indeed.

Dan: At the same time . . . they threatened to kill me if I disobey them.

Viva: I understand. . . . You acted in a way to show them that you were prevented by force.

Dan: (*nods*) That's it.

Viva: Who are they?

Dan: I don't know them exactly.

Viva: How did you know?

Dan: You promise me, again . . . not to tell him nor any other person?

Viva: I promise.

Dan: Dick told me. . . . He took part in the plot. . . . I wanted to prevent him from taking part . . . but I failed.

Viva: Isn't he your friend?

Dan: He was. . . . But now . . . I am in danger if he knows about what I tell you now.

Viva: We have to plan together. . . . Well . . . visit me tonight . . . but come from the other door. . . . We can talk and plan together.

Dan: That's nice. . . . I'll look outside first. . . . If there isn't anyone . . . I'll leave. . . . See you tonight.

Viva: See you tonight . . . and thank you. . . . (*to himself*) There's still good in this world. . . . A living conscience saved my life. (*The phone rings.*) Hullo. . . . Who is it? Dick? (*Anger appears on his face but he controls himself.*) Where have you been all these weeks? . . . Traveling on business? We have missed you much. Oh, yes . . . Jane is here. . . . She is eager to see you. (*He puts down the receiver and calls out.*) Jane . . . Jane?

Jane: (*coming quickly*) Yes, Dad.

Viva: Dick is coming!

Jane: Where has he been all that time?

Viva: He says he was traveling on business.

Jane: I don't want to see him again. . . . I'm not convinced of him.

Viva: (*thinking*) Are you sure? . . . Anyhow . . . don't give him the shock today . . . let it be for another time.

Jane: Why not today?

Viva: For my sake . . . and it is his first visit after the operation. . . . (*before leaving*) Oh! He has arrived. (**Dick** *enters.*)

Dick: (*in a sarcastic way*) Nice to see you again.

Jane: (*in a cold way*) Nice to see you again.

Viva: I'll leave you now to have your romantic talk . . . and after a while I'll come and tell you about the operation.

Dick: I am eager to know about it. (**Viva** *leaves the stage.*)

Jane: I had a dream.

Dick: Do you believe in dreams?

Jane: Our dreams are reflections of our worries, desires, and aspirations.

Dick: You read Freud nowadays?

Jane: Freud and others.

Dick: Never mind about dreams. . . . Let's talk about our present life.

Jane: You didn't ask me about the dream.

Dick: Because I like to talk about facts.

Jane: Aren't dreams facts?

Dick: Poets only dream . . . they aren't realists.

Jane: All of us dream.

Dick: And what in that?

Jane: We have to think of the meaning behind each dream.

Dick: (*laughing loudly*) Think of the meaning of dreams. . . . You have become superstitious.

Jane: (*gets angry*) Are you laughing at me?

Dick: Not at you . . . but at your thoughts.

Jane: My thoughts are part of me . . . or, more precisely, they represent the outcome of my mind.

Dick: Jane . . . today you are a reader of books or a student who wants to discuss an academic subject. . . . But we are lovers . . . we have to talk about love. . . .

Jane: Your talk now reminds me of *A Doll's House*.

Dick: I don't understand what you mean.

Jane: Nora's husband considered her a doll . . . exactly as you do now with me. . . . Nora left her house because she refused to be a doll. . . . She wanted to gain "respect."

Dick: Isn't it better to gain "love"?

Jane: She wanted to gain respect because she didn't want the love if it's not based on respect. . . . (*They look at each other and keep silent for two minutes.*) What is love for you?

Dick: What is love for me or for you is the same.

Jane: Tell me what it is for you, then I'll tell you what it is for me. . . . Then we can see if we have the same attitude.

Dick: For me . . . it is the desire to have my second half in my arms.

Jane: This is physical love.

Dick: Do you have categories of love?

Jane: Sometimes I sit alone and think. . . . Why do people love? Do they know the real meaning of love? Do they really love?

Dick: And then?

Jane: Sometimes I find the answer . . . sometimes I don't. . . . What about you?

Dick: I don't sit and waste my time in thinking. . . . I love . . . and practice life.

Jane: You once said . . . "I am a practical man."
Dick: That's it, Jane.
Jane: Why do people get married?
Dick: Because others marry.
Jane: Is it an imitation?
Dick: It is a satisfaction of an instinct.
Jane: Only?
Dick: Well . . . I remember Bernard Shaw's words about marriage. . . . Have you heard them?
Jane: I'd like to hear his opinion.
Dick: The rich man marries because he wants "an heir." . . . The middle-class man marries because he doesn't have enough money to spend on his mistress. . . . The poor man needs a servant and cannot pay for her.
Jane: (*laughs*) It is a satirical opinion . . . yet it carries a part of the truth. . . . What's your opinion?
Dick: I want to marry to be Jane's husband.
Jane: That's a diplomatic answer.
Dick: What do you mean?
Jane: It's an answer that gives no answer.
Dick: (*looks at her, amazed*) Today I need full attention to understand you.
Jane: Have you ever understood me?
Dick: Jane . . . it seems to me that I sit with you for the first time.

(**Viva** *comes.*)

Viva: May I sit with you?
Dick: Of course, Dad. . . . I am eager to know about the operation. . . . Did it succeed?
Viva: I think so.
Dick: I am pleased to hear so.
Viva: I was pleased to have you all around me. . . . It is a good feeling to have those who love me around me.
Dick: This is the least thing. . . . Man is a social animal.
Viva: Some people are only animals and they are not sociable.

Dick: I don't know why sociologists are fond of using the word "animal" to describe man.

Jane: Sometimes I find good traits in animals which we don't find in man.

Dick: Clarify what you mean.

Jane: Fidelity in the dog is rarely found in man. . . . Motherhood in animals may be stronger than that in man. . . . Sincerity and purity in doves may not be found in man.

Dick: Isn't man the descendant of animals?

Jane: You believe so?

Dick: Didn't Darwin say so?

Jane: It is his opinion.

Viva: What about morals?

Dick: The meaning of "morals" is not the same as it was during the Dark Ages.

Viva: What do you mean by the "Dark Ages"?

Dick: The previous ages in which man lived in illusion.

Jane: And now?

Dick: We have disillusion. . . . Now we are enlightened. . . . Now we have scientific progress. . . . Man has reached the moon. . . . In the past Romeo and Juliet looked at the moon.

Jane: They expressed their real and true feelings.

Dick: Did they have rockets to go there?

Viva: What is the importance of going to the moon?

Dick: I just want to show Jane the development that we have achieved. . . . We are living in the age of progress.

Jane: I repeat, "scientific progress," but we lack something important.

Viva: Yes, our moral values . . . the spiritual side.

Dick: Now we have disillusion. . . . We have got rid of all the past superstitions.

Viva: Have you achieved all that we have . . . all of a sudden?

Dick: No, each scientist adds something.

Viva: Didn't the people in the past know about science?

Dick: But their ideas were wrong.

Viva: Don't we apply Pythagorean property up till now? . . . Weren't the ancients the first to give us arithmetic?

Dick: I mean Aristotle's theory about the four elements. . . . Now modern chemistry proves that it is wrong. . . . Dalton discovered that . . .

Viva: (*interrupting*) Scientific explanation differs . . . and the Greeks didn't have the tools and equipment we have nowadays. . . . Yet still we study what they wrote.

Jane: Even before the Greeks, the ancient Egyptians built the Pyramids, which are the proof until now of progress of man in construction. . . . They were able to embalm the bodies.

Dick: What do you want to say to me?

Jane: That man has used his mind all over the ages. . . . Man was not ignorant and now he is educated. . . . Read the writings of those who came two thousand or three thousand years before us . . . or even more. . . . They weren't living in illusion, as you say.

Dick: But their superstitions.

Viva: But if some of them had superstitions, it doesn't mean that they lived in superstition.

Dick: They didn't have great scientists like Darwin.

Jane: Well . . . read the first page of the Bible . . . how the world was created. . . . Life appeared first in water, then on earth . . . and the last complicated creature was Adam.

Dick: And what in that?

Jane: I think that is what Darwin read, and he showed in his *Origin of Species* the same development. Then he added his interpretation that man is the descendant of animals.

Dick: But Darwin's theory had a scientific basis.

Viva: If the same was said in the past about life on earth . . . this shows that they knew about natural laws as we do. . . . The interpretation differs.

Dick: I accept Darwin's interpretation.

Jane: Can't the interpretation be wrong?

Dick: Of course not.

Viva: Why "of course"? In science . . . the true scientists say, I think . . . it may be so . . . or so.

Dick: Let's change the subject. . . . I am not interested in such discussions. . . . I don't like to waste my time.

Viva: I notice that the young people don't like to meditate or contemplate.

Dick: They want to live every minute of their lives. . . . (*to* **Jane**) How about going to a party tonight?

Jane: I'll attend a seance tonight.

Dick: Do you refuse to attend a party where you would enjoy yourself and go to a seance? (*He laughs at her.*) You are different now, Jane.

Jane: I want to prove the immortality of the "soul."

Dick: (*stands up and laughs*) You seem to be a new Nora. . . . Ibsen's Nora wanted respect before love. . . . What do you want?

Jane: Enlightment first . . . which leads up to deep thinking, morality, and satisfies my spiritual needs.

Dick: Look . . . Uncle Viva . . . how Jane has changed.

Viva: I like to be "Uncle Viva" instead of the false word "Dad."

Dick: I didn't mean to say "Uncle" . . . I should say "Dad."

Viva: Never mind. . . . For me, "Uncle Viva" represents Viva after the operation. . . . I want to guide our youth toward values . . . human values.

Dick: I think you have your effect on her.

Viva: If you mean by "effect" . . . values . . . human values . . . then I am pleased to find my daughters keeping human values.

Dick: But I'll convince Jane of having "love" first and I'll win. . . . I'll be victorious.

Viva: Let's see . . . which will win. . . . Morals or . . . (**Dick** *leaves the stage after the first part of the sentence.*) I am pleased, Jane, to listen to what you said. . . . Give him another chance to change. . . . If he doesn't . . . then he isn't worthy of being your husband.

Jane: That's what I think, Dad. (**Harry** *arrives, greets them. Then* **Jane** *enters to tell* **Suzy**.)

Viva: Thank you, Harry, for telling the police to stop Peter's threats.

Harry: This is the least thing that I should do. . . . If I want to be your son-in-law, then I must act as a son . . . not just say sweet words.

Viva: Indeed, Harry, I trust you now. . . . I consider men as metals. . . . As you find noble and base metals . . . the same is true of men. . . . We have noble men and false men.

Harry: We read about noble men in books more often than we see them.

Viva: You are right—but why don't we begin with ourselves? We act nobly . . . others may do the same thing. . . . Then the number will increase.

Harry: I ask myself why. Why are we fond of good people when we see them in the movies . . . but . . .

Viva: (*interrupting*) But do not follow their examples.

Harry: Yes. . . . Can you find a good interpretation?

Viva: I'll give you an example from my life. . . . My desire to make money made me blind to such facts . . . but the experiences I had before, during, and after the operation opened my eyes. . . . Now I am not that machine that collects money. . . . I am a man who thinks, feels, and contemplates.

(**Suzy** *arrives and greets* **Harry**.)

Viva: Excuse me now, Harry. . . . I have something to do inside. (*He moves the wheels of his chair with his hands and goes inside.*)

Suzy: Are you going to criticize me again?

Harry: Look, Suzy. . . . Every day . . . we have different experiences. . . . Some experiences have deeper effects than others.

Suzy: And what in that?

Harry: I want to get rid of all things that cause trouble to us in the future. . . . We may differ in things . . . but we should understand each other well.

Suzy: But why didn't you have such silly discussions before?

Harry: You mean before the operation?

Suzy: Yes, you used to flatter me. . . . You used to say nice words to me. . . . I was sometimes rough, but you smiled and praised me.

Harry: Then you notice that there is a change.
Suzy: Yes, a big change. . . . Why?
Harry: Your father faced death. . . .
Suzy: (*interrupting*) What is the relation between that and your change?
Harry: I began to think of many things. . . . Does money give us all we need?
Suzy: Yes, you can buy whatever you like.
Harry: Can it buy happiness?
Suzy: Is happiness bought and sold?
Harry: Well, say . . . can it bring us happiness?
Suzy: Why not?
Harry: Do you think that all rich people are happy?
Suzy: I don't know . . . ask them. . . . What is the importance of your question?
Harry: I want to tell you that I realized that money is not everything.
Suzy: You mean that money is not important?
Harry: Important for our physical needs only. . . . But there are other things that bring happiness.
Suzy: Let's talk of love and pleasant things that we used to talk about.
Harry: Of course love is the cornerstone in family happiness . . . but I want you to see some facts.
Suzy: Harry, I don't understand you now.
Harry: Let me explain things to you. . . . I was blind and I wanted only to obtain money by . . .
Suzy: Am I only a means to obtain money by?
Harry: That was when I was blind. . . . Now I think of you as my future wife.
Suzy: That's good. . . . You will love and flirt with me.
Harry: Of course . . . but married life also brings responsibilities. . . . So I help you to get rid of your childish mistakes.

(**Henry** *enters but they don't take any notice of him.* **Suzy** *stands up in anger.*)

Suzy: Do I make childish mistakes? . . . You are now different. (*She takes the ring off her finger and* **Harry** *does the same.*) I don't want your ring. (*She throws the ring away.*)

Harry: (*stands up to leave*) Neither do I. (*He throws the ring away.* **Suzy** *runs, leaving the stage, but* **Henry** *holds* **Harry**'*s arm when he is about to leave the stage.*)

Henry: Wait, Harry. . . . Don't make your decisions while you are angry.

Harry: (*still agitated*) You see how she threw my ring away!

Henry: Do we have to help our friends or abandon them when they need our help?

Harry: Of course we have to help our friends.

Henry: I need your help and Suzy needs your help, too.

Harry: How? She threw away my ring.

Henry: She has shown some improvement. . . . If you give her a shock, my treatment will fail. . . . She needs your help.

Harry: She is sensitive to what she sees around her. . . . At bottom she is fond of values . . . morals . . . good qualities . . . the examples of the heroes. . . . At the same time she wants to imitate some youth who think that this is modern life. . . . This causes conflict to her. . . .

Harry: I love Suzy and I want her to be my wife. . . .

Henry: So we can cooperate to help her. . . . She is my patient and she is your fiancée. . . . Okay?

Harry: (*nods*) Okay, Doctor. . . .

Henry: Would you wait for two minutes. . . . I'll fetch her. (**Henry** *leaves.* **Harry** *walks up and down. Then he notices an overhead projector and a tape recorder beside it. He presses a button. The only light on the stage is the light of the projector, which shows the pictures on the screen. This is a film prepared by* **Viva. Viva** *appears on the screen.*)

Viva's voice: To all those who stood beside me while I faced death . . . I dedicate this documentary film about people's attitudes toward death.

(*Then* **Nietzsche** *appears on the screen.*)

Viva's voice: Who are you?

Nietzsche's voice: I am Nietzsche. . . . Don't believe these things. This is a "religion of slaves."

Viva's voice: How?

Nietzsche's voice: By threats of punishment after death, they tried to assure better behaviour in this life.

(**Nietzsche** *disappears.*)

Viva's voice: In the Middle ages they called death the "Great Doom." (*We see a picture of a church. We hear what the people are saying:* "We don't fear death in itself. . . . We fear hell. . . . But we hope to go to paradise." **Viva** *appears on the third slide.*)

Viva's voice: Look what Prince Aryan from India says when he comes.

(**Prince Aryan** *appears on the screen.*)

Prince Aryan's voice: I show you sorrow; for old age and death are humanly inevitable and they are sorrow.

(*On the fourth slide appears a victorious* **Roman General** *with a wreath of victory on his head. Behind him is a* **slave**.)

Viva's voice: Look at this victorious Roman general. . . . He is proud of himself and his victory and listen to what his slave tells him.

Slave's voice: Remember, you too are mortal.

(**Henry** *enters with* **Suzy,** *so* **Harry** *stops the film.*)

Henry: It's a nice film . . . we'll see it later. . . . Come, Harry, and bring your ring. (*He brings the ring from the table and Suzy does the same. They look at each other silently.*)

Henry: I explained everything to Suzy. (**Harry** *advances toward* **Suzy**, *takes her and puts his ring on her finger. She does the same.*) That's good. (*They sit down.*) Some people call quarreling between man and wife or fiancée the pepper of life . . . and I don't want you to act violently in any discussion.

Harry: (*to* **Henry**) I want her to understand me well.

Suzy: I want to understand you. . . . I want to live in happiness with you.

Harry: I love you, Suzy.

Suzy: Me, too. (*Infatuated, they look at each other.*)

Henry: (*smiles*) Well, well . . . so let love lead you in your life.

(*Suddenly a loud cry from the inside*—"Help! Help!" *Then a shot.* **Henry**, **Harry**, *and* **Suzy** *look at each other. There is a sound of hitting. Then* **Two Servants** *come from inside the villa, catching* **Peter**.)

First Servant: He stole the money—then he shot at Mr. Coward.

Henry: Why have you done so?

Peter: This is my money. (*A* **Third Servant** *comes with a rope. The* **Two Servants** *make* **Peter** *sit by force and the* **Third Servant** *ties him with the rope round his feet and the legs of the chair.*)

Third Servant: We will cut his body piece by piece.

Suzy: I'll call the police up.

Harry: Wait a minute. . . . We want to know everything first.

Henry: (*dials the phone*) Emergency . . . please . . . Viva's Villa, 206 Main Street. . . . (*to* **Peter**) What did you say?

Peter: I am his son. (**Ann** *comes hurriedly from the outside door, weeping.* **Peter** *addresses her.*) I have killed him as I told you.

Ann: Why? So I came late. . . . I couldn't prevent you from this dreadful crime.

Peter: He deprived me of my rights . . . I deprived him of his life. . . . Isn't he my father, who . . .

Ann: He is not your father.

Peter: What? Didn't you tell me so?
Ann: What a disaster! You also will lose your life. (*crying*)
Peter: Didn't you tell me that Viva is my father?
Ann: We wanted to blackmail him . . . to take his money only. . . . I tried to deceive him . . . but you took away his life.
Henry: Those who sent you to do this bad deed are free and you will sit on the electric chair and die.
Peter: No. . . . I don't want to die.
Harry: If you prove to the police that you were a victim and tell them about . . . the others . . . you will not die.
Peter: I'll tell them.
Henry: Who sent you to rob and kill Mr. Coward?
Peter: The "big boss" and Dick.
Harry: What did they promise you?
Peter: They promised me a big reward.
Ann: The "big boss" also planned my part.
Henry: Do you know him?
Ann: Yes, he is Viva's enemy. . . . Now . . . I am his girl friend.
Peter: So your past lover was Viva. . . . Your present lover is the big boss . . . and I am the victim. . . . No . . . I'll not let you free and I die.
Harry: What did Dick tell you?
Peter: He told me that the big boss is his uncle and he wants to help me to get money from Viva and from him.
Harry: Is the big boss his uncle?
Ann: No, he likes to call him his uncle. . . . He is one of his men.

(*The siren of the police car is heard—***Jane** *comes out.*)

Jane: I phoned the police and Dick.
Henry: Why? We want to get information . . . to know those who are behind this crime and thus help the police.
Policeman: (*after his arrival*) What happened?
Harry: This young man robbed and shot Mr. Coward.

(**Dick** *arrives and goes to* **Jane.**)

Dick: What's wrong, Jane?
Peter: I killed Viva, as you wanted.
Dick: What do you say? Do you know me?
Peter: Know you? You are Dick. . . . Your uncle is the big boss.
Dick: (*to the* **Policeman**) It seems that this man is mad.
Peter: Yes, I am mad because I am the tool of your crime . . . your uncle.
Dick: (*to* **Henry**) I have no uncles at all.
Ann: I saw you in the big boss's office.
Dick: Who are you, woman?
Ann: (*to the* **Policeman**) Arrest him, too, and I'll show you the office of the big boss.
Dick: (*to the* **Policeman**) You can't arrest me for such mad accusations. . . . I am a respectable and honest man . . . and he (*pointing to* **Peter**) is a criminal and she is a prostitute.
Jane: Do you know her?
Dick: Yes, I am sure that she is . . .
Henry: Your uncle's mistress.
Dick: I have no uncles.
Henry: I mean she is the big boss' mistress.
Dick: Yes, she is only a mistress.
Ann: I am not . . . (*she weeps*) a prostitute. . . . You'll pay for this filthy accusation.
Dick: Any man can realize what you are.
Peter: If I were free, I would kill you too. . . . How do you dare to insult my mother?
Dick: What are you? And what's your mother? (*to the* **Policeman**) Take them to the police station. . . . (*in a sarcastic way*) You dare to kill my father-in-law. . . . I'll send you to the electric chair. (*He weeps.*) My dad is dead. (*The* **Policeman** *looks at* **Henry** *and* **Harry**.)
Harry: (*to the* **Policeman**) Wait a minute, please. . . . (*He takes the tape recorder, which is beside the overhead projector.*) Take this tape . . . (*He ejects the tape.*) and listen to the conversation between the big boss and Dick.

Dick: When did you record it?

Henry: So you know the big boss.

Dick: No, I don't know him.

Harry: Okay, Mr. Dick . . . you will confess everything when you hear the tape with the police.

Dick: But I didn't kill anyone.

Harry: Didn't you try? Well . . . just a minute. (*He takes the tape recorder and puts the tape in.*)

Dick: The big boss asked me to . . . (*to* **Harry**) How did you record my talk with him?

Harry: Have you forgotten that I got the police permission . . . and I recorded Peter's threats?

Dick: Yes, I remember . . . but I didn't do what the big boss asked me to do.

Policeman: What did he ask you to do?

Dick: To kill Viva.

Policeman: Well, Dick . . . you and Mr. Peter are under arrest . . . and all the others who are involved in the crime. (*He arrests both and ties their hands. They begin to leave the stage; then the* **Policeman** *stops and talks to* **Harry**.) Please, sir, give me the tape.

Harry: There is nothing in the tape . . . but it helped to make Dick confess. (*The ambulance arrives. The* **Paramedics** *enter with a stretcher. They carry* **Viva** *on the stretcher to the stage.*)

Jane: Are you seriously injured, Dad?

Viva: I don't know whether I'll live or die . . . but what I ask you to do . . . is to love each other. . . . The bullet is the symbol of evil in this world. . . . I made sins. . . . I lived in this evil world . . . blind to the blessings of morals. . . . But remember, love each other. (*He is carried from the stage. Slow music is heard. All others go after him and the curtain falls.*)



THE LOST EQUILIBRIUM
A One-Act Play

Characters (In Order of Appearance)

Mother
Jane
Father
Harry
Sam
Suzy
Kate
Joe



(**Jane** *is putting on a tape when her* **Mother** *enters.*)

Mother: Good morning, Jane.

Jane: Good morning, Mum. (**Jane** *leaves the recorder and sits down.*)

Mother: Why have you got up early? It's a holiday.

Jane: I know, but my deep thinking deprives me of sound sleep.

Mother: Is there any problem with you? Tell me about it. . . . Is there any trouble?

Jane: Don't be worried, Mum. It is a problem, but I am not in trouble.

Mother: What is it?

Jane: It's just a matter of making a decision.

Mother: Every day we make decisions, but we are not always worried. What do you want?

Jane: I want to make a decision that affects my whole life.

Mother: You mean to get married. . . . You can easily get married.

Jane: Yes, but it is not easy to find the suitable man.

Mother: Oh! There are many nice fellows.

Jane: But who can I find worthy of being my husband?

Mother: You are not Queen Jane who wants to find the right man to become king.

Jane: Every girl is a queen in her home, and it is difficult to find the right partner in life.

Mother: There are many rich and handsome young men. . . . You can choose one of them.

Jane: Is it as easy as you think?

Mother: Yes. I decided to have your father as my husband. . . . (*She notices the* **Father** *enter, so she adds*) He isn't handsome, as you know.

Father: (*angrily*) What do you say, Mary?

Mother: I am telling her how I ensnared you in my net and caught you as my husband.

Father: Yes . . . I was a prey in the hands of a tiger.

Mother: Am I brutal? And you are a peaceful lamb?

Jane: Can't you stop quarreling?

Mother: This is not quarreling. . . . It is the pepper of life.

Father: Have you decided on the person you will take?

Jane: Not yet. . . . I am considering the matter . . . but I am worried indeed.

Father: Is it a dilemma?

Jane: Not exactly . . . but you can consider it so.

Father: So you have two suitors.

Mother: She has many suitors. . . . She is beautiful, well off, intelligent, and well educated. . . . She has inherited all my qualities.

Father: But Jane is beautiful.

Mother: She is as beautiful as *I* . . . as *I* (*raising her voice*) You are too blind to see that.

Father: And stupid, too.

Mother: I didn't say so.

Father: I know that I was stupid enough to agree to be your husband.

Mother: Oh! No! That's the only intelligent deed that you have ever achieved.

Father: Anyhow, let us tackle Jane's dilemma.

Jane: What is the suitable husband, in your opinion?

Father: The man who can make you happy.

Jane: I know that . . . but can I decide that such a person can make me happy?

Mother: (*interrupts*) A rich and handsome young man can make you happy.

Jane: Do you think so, Mum?

Mother: Of course, look at your cousins. . . . All of them got married to rich people.

Jane: But most of them are not happy.

Mother: I find that they are happy. . . . They own everything—villas, cars, fine clothes, gold, luxurious furniture, and lots of land.

Jane: Do you consider this a measure of happiness?

Mother: Sure.

Father: Look, Jane . . . bear in mind what I told you yesterday.

Mother: Do you want me to repeat it again?

Jane: No, thanks. . . . I recorded your discussion. (*points to the tape*)

Mother: It is better to accept Harry. . . . Meet him today as you have arranged before . . . and cancel Joe's appointment.

Father: You should meet both of them as you arranged. . . . Then you can take your decision . . . after thinking over the matter more than once. . . . (*He looks at his watch.*) Mary, let's leave her alone. . . . Harry will be here in five minutes. (*They leave the stage.*)

(**Jane** *moves to the tape recorder and presses "play," then she sits in the armchair. She leans her head back on the top of the chair and listens to the tape.*)

Harry's voice: Hi, Jane.

Jane's voice: Hi, Harry.

Harry's voice: Let's go to the swimming pool . . . to enjoy ourselves.

Jane's voice: That's nice. (*A pause*—**Jane** *moves her head and leans again.*)

Harry' voice: You have a graceful, slim body.

Jane's voice: Thank you. . . . Your body also is like a champion's body.

Harry's voice: I am a champion . . . don't you know? All the girls in our district know this. . . . You don't know this?

Jane's voice: I am not in the district.

(Knocks at the door. **Jane** *moves to door and opens it.* **Harry** *appears in the doorway.)*

Harry: Hi, Jane.

Jane: Hi, Harry. Please come in. *(The tape is still going and we hear* **Harry***'s voice: "Let's have a kiss."* **Jane** *moves to the recorder, stops the tape, and sits down.)*

Harry: So let us have a kiss, as the tape says.

Jane: Please, Harry, be serious. . . . Let us talk over our future.

Harry: Okay . . . let's enjoy our future now.

Jane: You like to enjoy yourself every minute.

Harry: You have begun to understand me. . . . I don't want a minute to lapse without pleasure.

Jane: Life is pleasant to you.

Harry: Yes. As a poet once said, "Don't let time beguile you." That is, deceive you. So you should not waste even a second in your life.

Jane: Do you mean that you work all the time without fun?

Harry: I work in order to have fun. . . . Fun is my aim in life . . . and where can I find fun except with a beautiful young woman?

Jane: Fun is your aim in life?

Harry: Sure. . . . Don't you like fun? . . . Let us have fun now.

Jane: By the way, my father is about to get up and join us here, as I told you.

Harry: *(surprised)* Your father! Why does he have to meet us so early? I think that we had better enjoy a nice time during the holiday . . . and then I'll get acquainted with your father just before leaving.

Jane: Well . . . we can talk and talk until he comes.

Harry: *(somewhat annoyed)* Only talk?

Jane: And sing and play. . . . I shall show you what I write. . . . I write poetry, too.

Harry: I remember two lines from . . . er . . . er *(stammering)* I don't remember the poet's name, but they are useful.

Jane: Useful? How can poetry be useful?

Harry: When I recited them they had their effect on the girl, whoever she might be, with me . . . and we acted on them.

Jane: What are they?

Harry: "Drink to me only with thine eyes/and I will pledge with mine." So, the girl looked at me and was fascinated by me and then surrendered to me.

Jane: She could not resist your attraction.

Harry: (*Smiling*) That has happened on many occasions.

Jane: Hum! I can see that you follow a plan to make me jealous of those you came across in your adventures.

Harry: Not exactly. . . . I want to prove to you the effect I have on young ladies.

Jane: I don't need any proof. . . . You are handsome.

Harry: Thank you.

Jane: You are smart.

Harry: Thank you.

Jane: You are brave . . . strong . . . a champion . . . adventurous . . .

Harry: Oh! You know much about me.

Jane: But you don't know a lot about me.

Harry: What I want to know about you is clear before me.

Jane: You are intelligent, too . . . but what do you want to know?

Harry: I can see that you are the type of girl who will not easily surrender . . . but . . .

Jane: But what?

Harry: But I like this type; because it makes me eager to follow new strategies until she surrenders in the end.

Jane: An exciting type of adventure.

Harry: Quite exciting . . . but I am obstinate, too.

Jane: I do not see that you are obstinate. . . . You can easily throw your bait and the fish will fall in your net.

Harry: You praise me highly. . . . I admire your way of expressing eulogy.

Jane: Eulogy is your preferable nourishment.

Harry: What do you mean by this metaphysical sentence?

Jane: You are intelligent, aren't you?

Harry: I don't get you.

Jane: Handsome men, like you, are always eager to listen to people who praise them.

Harry: You are cunning. . . . You praise me to catch me in your net.

Jane: You are actually a big catch, Harry.

Harry: Thanks again. . . . Jane, your words are not as straightforward as the words of most girls.

Jane: Maybe because I am not "any girl."

Harry: That's true. You are not a plain girl. . . . You are this kind of difficult woman. . . . But I defy you . . . I'll win in the end.

Jane: I accept your challenge. . . . What if you lose?

Harry: I have never lost a battle with any woman.

Jane: You may add, "Up till now."

Harry: Why am I to add this?

Jane: Because you have only met naive girls . . . girls who are after something trivial . . . girls who don't understand the core meaning of life.

Harry: Jane . . . are you a girl or a philosopher?

Jane: I am a girl . . . but a mature girl.

Harry: You are not normal, my dear. . . . A girl should live for love.

Jane: What is the meaning of love, as you understand it?

Harry: Love is love as any human being understands it.

Jane: Everyone interprets it as he understands it.

Harry: As a man who is interested in studying animal life, I give a word to each action which is applied in all situations.

Jane: Is animal life your branch of study?

Harry: Haven't I told you before?

Jane: No, you haven't. . . . You always told me about your adventures with Eve.

Harry: I don't know anyone whose name is Eve.

Jane: I mean the fair sex.

Harry: *(feels proud of himself)* My friends call me Casanova . . . after the name of the man who is known

for his adventures with women. He praised them and in this way they became his prey.

Jane: Why haven't you kept any of them up till now?

Harry: None of them could convince me of their being my wife.

Jane: Because all you wished to have could be attained.

Harry: Maybe . . . but I find that you will be the one who will entrap me.

Jane: Why?

Harry: Your beauty . . . your sex appeal . . . your intelligence . . . your voice is angelic . . . your eloquence . . . your choice of fashion . . . your social position . . . and you are Venus.

Jane: I don't find all these qualities in me.

Harry: Oh, no . . . your eyes are blue . . . your cheeks are red . . . your hair is blonde and long . . . your mouth . . .

Jane: (*interrupting*) Wait a minute.

Harry: No, I can't wait. . . . Your lips are warm as my love.

Jane: Your love?

Harry: Sure . . . I have fallen in love to my ears. . . . I adore you.

Jane: You are exaggerating.

Harry: Oh, no. . . . Your love inspires me. . . . Oh! Where are the roses? (*He looks around, then he gives her a red rose.*) You know it's symbol. . . . It expresses the fire inside me. . . . I am burning.

Jane: Oh! What a pity.

Harry: (*Gives her a white rose*) This expresses chastity and fidelity.

Jane: Whose chastity?

Harry: Yours.

Jane: And whose fidelity?

Harry: Mine.

Jane: I hope so.

Harry: (*gives her a yellow rose*) And this expresses jealousy.

Jane: Then why do you give it to me?

Harry: Because jealousy makes love intense.

Jane: You understand the language of flowers.

Harry: Not only flowers . . . I understand the language of lips. . . . Some lips are warm but others are cold.

Jane: You can distinguish between them?

Harry: Of course . . . from long experience.

Jane: Hum. (*She is pensive, her mind astray.*)

Harry: I understand also the language of the eyes. . . . Some eyes are inviting all the time . . . others are inviting for one night . . . others . . .

Jane: (*interrupting*) How do you count the time of invitation?

Harry: As long as desire appears in the eyes.

Jane: Hum . . . desire . . . but not love.

Harry: Desire and love are twins. In fact, they are one.

Jane: Which kind of desire do you mean?

Harry: If you have a male and a female . . . you can understand it.

Jane: No, I can't. Maybe I lack your experience.

Harry: Don't make me laugh. Adam and Eve always have one common desire.

Jane: You mean the animal side?

Harry: I am not talking about animals . . . I am talking about sex appeal in both. . . . They extinguish their sexual appetite.

Jane: You told me that you are interested in animals.

Harry: Oh, no. I study animal life, but I am interested in women.

Jane: What is the difference between man and animal?

Harry: What a joke, my dear! We talk about love and adventures and you ask me such a simple question.

Jane: You find it simple?

Harry: Sure. Man talks, but animals don't.

Jane: Pay attention. Both animals and men talk.

Harry: How is that, Jane? Do you speak to an animal?

Jane: Of course, I do. I speak to my pets.

Harry: Do they answer you? Do they speak to you?

Jane: They speak . . . no . . . but they answer me. . . . The dog will shake its tail to express joy.

Harry: Animals don't speak . . . but they talk. . . . How is that, Jane?

Jane: They can't make a speech because they don't have a spoken language, but their movements, actions, and gestures are considered "talk."

Harry: You are interested in vocabulary . . . so you give me the difference between "talk" and "speak," but you can't tell me the difference between man and animal.

Jane: I asked you this question, but you didn't answer.

Harry: Can you answer it?

Jane: Yes, but my answer will surely be different from yours as we are different persons . . . having different attitudes.

Harry: According to Darwin's book *The Origin of Species*, man is descendant of animals, especially the ape. I agree with him.

Jane: But I don't agree. Even if you don't believe that man is Adam's son as created by the Almighty God . . . you can study man's mind and then you will realize that man consists of body, mind, and soul.

Harry: We are talking about scientific matters. . . . We have to talk about love. . . . Let us return to that interesting subject.

Jane: I wonder how you can ignore your mental ability and talk as any illiterate man?

Harry: *(upset, he stands up)* Jane, don't insult me, please. You are the first girl in my life to do so.

Jane: Because none of those with whom you had a relationship tried to study you. You only spent a pleasant time.

Harry: What do you suggest . . . to have a bad time?

Jane: I don't say so . . . but if a horse and a mare meet for a certain purpose they finish it.

Harry: Be clearer, Jane. I mean, I did not get what you mean.

Jane: Can't you understand my simile?

Harry: No . . . and no.

Jane: Animals behave or act . . . according to their physical appetite or need.

Harry: Does this differ with human beings?

Jane: Sometimes this does not differ, but most of the time it differs or it should differ.

Harry: Again I want you to be clear.

Jane: Am I talking about mysterious things? Human beings differ in their attitudes towards life . . . differ in their interpretation of many things in life . . . and in their understanding of the meaning of things.

Harry: Jane, you'd better study philosophy. (*He stands up.*) You are the only girl whom I can't understand. (*He moves toward the door to leave while* **Jane** *is watching him. Then he stops.*) But this makes me so eager to defy you that I will win in the end.

Jane: Is it a battle, Harry?

Harry: Now it is. (*He returns and sits down.*)

Jane: What kind of battle?

Harry: An interesting fight. . . . You are different from those I met before . . . but I have to find new weapons to win the battle.

Jane: (*sarcastically*) The hunter cannot take it easy if he fails to catch the bird. It is against his pride.

Harry: You are right in this example.

Jane: But you are no hunter and I am not your bird.

Harry: You are my sparrow . . . my chanting canary bird . . . because you are beautiful . . . and your voice is sweet.

Jane: Can't you talk to me on equal grounds?

Harry: We are on equal grounds.

Jane: But you don't respect my feelings as a mature human being.

Harry: How is that? I not only respect you but I love you as well. In spite of all the bitter words you threw at me, I feel I can't leave you.

Jane: As a human being . . . I have my body, which you only want . . . my soul, which you can't understand . . . and my mind, which you can't appreciate.

Harry: Oh! We come back to philosophy. . . . Jane, I hate philosophy. . . . I hate all the philosophers.

Jane: Do you consider this philosophy?

Harry: What else can it be?

Jane: A mature outlook on ourselves. Haven't you ever asked yourself, "What am I?"

Harry: I never asked . . . and shall never ask, because I know what I am.

Jane: My dear, you don't know. . . . You look at yourself from the animal point of view.

Harry: Do animals have point of view?

Jane: I mean the physical side, which I call the animal side. . . . But you are far away from the spiritual side.

Harry: Jane, I dislike metaphysics. . . . I am a realist. . . . I am a living man . . . living today . . . with all the means I have.

Jane: Are you actually living?

Harry: Of course, I am. I never waste a second of my life without making use of it.

Jane: If you think or read a useful book, then you waste your time. Isn't it so?

Harry: It is enough to read at the university. . . . Now I have a job. . . . I have made a lot of money. . . . So we can enjoy our life. . . . Jane, you will be the happiest of wives with me.

Jane: *(surprised)* It is the first time you've mentioned the word "wife." . . . Do you really intend to get married?

Harry: To you . . . Yes and yes and yes.

Jane: Have you suddenly decided to get married?

Harry: Now . . . I am convinced of you. . . . You agree, of course.

Jane: Don't surprise me. . . . Give me a chance, please.

Harry: *(He stands up.)* Okay, I'll let you think over this important matter. . . . I shall call you up in the evening. . . . Will you then tell me your decision?

Jane: Sure.

(**Harry** *leaves, with* **Jane** *showing him out. The telephone rings.* **Jane** *answers the phone and lights show that the speaker is in another room, represented by another space at the back of the stage revealed as a screen opens.*)

Jane: Hullo.
Sam: Jane . . . It's Sam. . . . Bye-bye.
Jane: Are you traveling?
Sam: Yes, traveling away from this world.
Jane: (*surprised*) What?
Sam: I can't bear to see you with another man.
Jane: What are you talking about?
Sam: I love you but you don't love me.
Jane: Sam, we are friends . . . and that's enough.
Sam: Enough for you but not for me. . . . I want you.
Jane: Listen to me, Sam. . . . There are things in life which we can't decide.
Sam: You are mature enough to decide.
Jane: I mean . . . there are tendencies that are inherent. . . . They are our inner feelings.
Sam: Why don't you reciprocate my love? My love for you is great, pure, and sublime.
Jane: Friendship also is a kind of love.
Sam: But I want the love that exists between man and woman. . . . You don't bear it for me. . . . So I'll get rid of this torture by committing suicide.
Jane: Do you think this is the solution?
Sam: What else can I do? I am lonely . . . depressed and refused.
Jane: Will you listen to your mind? Think of what you want to do.
Sam: My heart is broken.
Jane: The world is full of broken hearts . . . but they do not think as you do. . . . Besides . . . why are you broken?
Sam: Because you rejected my love.
Jane: Love is a mutual emotion. . . . Unilateral love soon fades away.
Sam: Is there anything wrong in my behavior towards you?
Jane: No, my dear . . . I respect you. . . . That's why I consider you my friend. . . . This emotion is mostly spontaneous.
Sam: You said it. . . . Love is spontaneous.
Jane: But we have to control it if it causes harm to us.

Sam: Love never causes harm.

Jane: If it is not based on solid grounds, it will surely cause harm.

Sam: I never think of causing harm to you, my dear.

Jane: Is it the first time you have felt like this?

Sam: Yes, darling . . . the first and the last love.

Jane: It is a new experience to you. . . . The second experience will not be as foolish as this one.

Sam: You consider me foolish because I love you. . . . My love is vehement and not to be denied.

Jane: Love is not a foolish emotion.

Sam: You repeat the word "foolish" again.

Jane: If you think like this, you are foolish. . . . Suppose you get any shock—will you get rid of yourself?

Sam: Why should I live after a shock?

Jane: To understand life and to get more experience and to be mature.

Sam: I am mature.

Jane: Sorry, you are not. . . . None should leave himself open to any folly.

Sam: I feel jealous when I see you talking with anyone. Jealousy is a sign of love.

Jane: Sam, you are a handsome young man, but you lack experience in life. You have to get through different experiences to be a full man. . . . Then you will come across the girl who will love you and whom you will love. . . . Then you will be the right husband for her.

Sam: Think again and tell me you love me.

Jane: Love cannot be given to beggars.

Sam: Am I a beggar? I have my dignity.

Jane: Right . . . this is the first step to maturity. Keep your self-pride and you will be successful next time. . . . Bye-bye. (*She puts the receiver down. Lights return and the screen revealing* **Sam** *is closed. A knock at the door and* **Suzy** *enters.*)

Suzy: Hi, Jane.

Jane: Hi, Suzy.

Suzy: Hasn't Kate arrived yet?

Jane: Did she tell you that she would visit me?

Suzy: Yes . . . we consider you our referee.

Jane: Do you have a game?

Suzy: Yes, it is a game. . . . It is a game of love. (*A knock at the door and* **Kate** *enters.*) Hi, Kate. I arrived two minutes ago.

Kate: You know the traffic. . . . (*She sits.*)

Suzy: (*to* **Jane**) Kate loves a young man who is not suitable for her.

Kate: And you love a young angel who is not suitable for you.

Jane: Then exchange your lovers. (*They laugh.*)

Suzy: I want a man with a capital "M," but my suitor is a nice, young, taciturn man. He is gentle, indeed, but I do not feel myself a woman in front of him.

Jane: Look, Suzy . . . I know what you are. Your love is lust more than real love.

Suzy: What do you mean by real love? Do you mean this Platonic love?

Kate: Yes . . . that's the real love. . . . But my suitor is a brutal type. He is a champion. . . . Suzy may feel proud of him, but I don't.

Suzy: Which side do you take, Jane? Love as I know it—I mean, a man and woman—or as Kate's Platonic love?

Jane: Neither!

Kate *and* **Suzy:** Why?

Jane: Platonic love is not complete . . . and body love is not complete.

Suzy: Doesn't love satisfy our bodies?

Jane: Body and soul.

Kate: Body side is the animal side . . . but love is for angels. . . . It is a spiritual love. . . . (*in a dreaming way*) When I love . . . and find my lover . . . we'll fly above the clouds . . . beyond the moon . . . away from the earth and its troubles. . . . We'll sing with the birds . . . and live in heaven. . . .

Jane: (*interrupting her*) But we are living on earth. That's why I say that your love is not complete. . . . There is something lacking.

Kate: What kind of love do you recommend?

Jane: That which keeps the equilibrium between soul and body. (*A knock at the door.* **Joe** *enters. The two girls say together, "See you later," and leave.*)

Joe: I am sorry, Jane. I forgot your date.

Jane: (*gets angry*) Because it is not important.

Joe: I did not say that.

Jane: We know that we forget things that we do not like to remember.

Joe: I was not precise in my sentence. . . . I . . .

Jane: (*interrupting*) Do you think that I shall be pleased when I hear a sentence like this!

Joe: Of course, no . . . I came . . . but only late.

Jane: Why?

Joe: I was absorbed in reading a new book about psychology. Suddenly I looked at the watch and found that I was late . . . so I hurried.

Jane: (*reprovingly*) The book is more important than me.

Joe: Will you excuse this fault?

Jane: It is not a matter of being at fault. . . . The behavior shows the inner self.

Joe: Why do you get so angry about my being an hour late?

Jane: It is not a matter of being an hour late . . . it is if you care to come or not.

Joe: I don't understand girls' behavior.

Jane: Why, Joe? Aren't you living in society?

Joe: I am . . . but I find that women's thinking is completely different from men's. They are the opposite.

Jane: I think you haven't studied society very well. You are living in your "ivory tower."

Joe: I am in my ivory tower to watch society.

Jane: Watching is not the same as living among men and women and dealing with them.

Joe: I study them in the books I read.

Jane: This is a second-hand experience, but you yourself get no experience.

Joe: You mean to have adventures with women. . . . No, no, my dear.

Jane: Do you consider any relationship in society to be adventure only?

Joe: Most men talk about these things as adventures.

Jane: I have been acquainted with many men and women . . . but I do not consider these adventures. Adventures are only illegitimate relations between man and woman . . . and that's something detested in a respectable environment.

Joe: You are putting me in a corner and shooting all your fiery weapons at me.

Jane: Why?

Joe: Because I am unable to defend myself in front of you.

Jane: Am I attacking you?

Joe: In an aggressive way. . . . From the first second you got angry and blamed me . . . I mean reproved me.

Jane: For being late . . . and for forgetting our appointment.

Joe: If you loved reading as I do, you would not blame me.

Jane: I love reading, but I do not forget my social life.

Joe: What I want you to do . . . is to be living for your soul . . . and . . .

Jane: Why do you want me? And what do you mean by living for your soul?

Joe: I want you to turn from this feminine thinking . . . to mature thinking . . . in order to be happy in our married life.

Jane: How can I be changed?

Joe: That's what I am planning to do. . . . You have to be living for your soul, as I say.

Jane: Will you explain what you mean?

Joe: Sure. Women or girls think only of earthly, trivial matters. For me they represent the body life, which is secular and immature. But men—I mean mature men—think of things above . . . women's understanding.

Jane: Of course we differ from men. We think first of our homes, our children, the society in which we live . . . but some men think of abstract things.

Joe: I want you to think of sublime matters.

Jane: What are these sublime matters?

Joe: The meaning behind life . . . happiness to all humanity . . . the problems of peace and war.

Jane: Can you think of children, home, and society as we do?

Joe: My imagination goes beyond these simple matters.

Jane: They are not simple. . . . These things constitute life.

Joe: For women only . . . and (*hesitatingly*) some men. . . . But I like to inhabit my own world.

Jane: I want to understand your world and I want you to understand my world.

Joe: My world is based on all the outcomes of human mind and soul.

Jane: You think of human beings as souls more than bodies.

Joe: That's true, and I want you to do the same.

Jane: The same as what? You want to make of me a different person?

Joe: Why not? A woman that can bear my name.

Jane: (*She looks annoyed.*) What is life . . . for you?

Joe: "What is life, if full of care/We have no time to stand and stare."

Jane: Oh! You are a poet.

Joe: I don't write poetry . . . but I recite these lines and contemplate.

Jane: What have you come to?

Joe: Contemplation is an incessant process. . . . As long as our minds work, we can contemplate.

Jane: But most people don't contemplate.

Joe: Because they are after one limited thing at a time. They want to increase their income, for instance, so they try to find a suitable job.

Jane: Why don't you do the same?

Joe: This depends on the aim of life, which I have before me.

Jane: Will you be more specific?

Joe: Am I not specific?

Jane: Sometimes you aren't. . . . You throw philosophical thoughts over my head and let me think of their meanings.

Joe: I am not a philosopher, either. . . . Look, Jane . . . what I say is that . . . I like to ask myself, "Why? How? When?" in order to understand the world in which we live.

Jane: I'll give you specific questions.

Joe: Okay, go ahead.

Jane: Are you satisfied with this world?

Joe: Do you consider this a specific question? It is better to add, "this world of ours."

Jane: Then I'll ask you: What is meant by "ours"?

Joe: You are right. . . . Ours may be the society in a certain town or a certain family or a certain country . . .

Jane: You see? . . . A question to you is divided into many questions.

Joe: That's contemplation, my dear.

Jane: I want to understand you . . . but I can't.

Joe: Am I difficult to understand?

Jane: Do you mean I am too stupid to understand you?

Joe: No, dear, don't misunderstand me. . . . Let us cut down our talk into chunks.

Jane: Is it a problem to be divided? Nevertheless, I'll ask you a question at a time. . . . Are you happy?

Joe: I am happy to be with you.

Jane: Thank you for the compliment. I ask you to get an answer.

Joe: You mean . . . I'll have an investigation.

Jane: No, discussion.

Joe: As with any controversial topic, there should be pros and cons.

Jane: What do you mean?

Joe: "Cons" are the contrary suppositions, and "pros" are the points that support your idea.

Jane: You seem to be fond of giving new channels that take us away from your meaning. . . . In this way we don't meet.

Joe: You mean we don't come to a conclusion?

Jane: And that we are also different.

Joe: Well, I cannot say whether I am happy or not. . . . This depends on the different situations. . . . I am pleased to see you. . . . I am pleased to see a comic film. But sometimes I am not in the mood for seeing any film. So the word "happy" is an elastic word.

Jane: What are the words that are not elastic?

Joe: Words in context will have a limited meaning.

Jane: Can you illustrate what you say?

Joe: Well . . . how do you feel when I say "night"?

Jane: It means nighttime, not daytime.

Joe: I say . . . how do you feel then?

Jane: It is dark and not light.

Joe: The dictionary will say so . . . but each human being will say a different thing.

Jane: Do you mean some of them say it is light?

Joe: Maybe . . . the insane may say so . . . but I mean that a child may feel afraid of something when he hears "night." For him it may mean the bad experience he once went through.

Jane: And what does it mean to you?

Joe: To me . . . it is time for contemplation and writing. The quiet time is the best time for me.

Jane: And does it mean anything else?

Joe: It may remind someone of death.

Jane: You mean . . . we put the meaning into words.

Joe: That's partly true. But if we use the word "night" in a context, it will limit its meaning. If I say one dark night . . . it will be clear that I mean the night when something bad will occur.

Jane: You make me think of every word when I talk to you.

Joe: And you don't like this?

Jane: I can't say that I don't like this. . . . It gives me pleasure to listen to your words and to think.

Joe: Thinking is the soul's nourishment, as food is the body's nourishment.

Jane: I think you neglect your physical needs.
Joe: You are right in this. For me, man is soul rather than body.
Jane: That's a new outlook.
Joe: It is not new. . . . Since the dawn of history many people have adopted this idea.
Jane: Then you have to be a monk.
Joe: I am not fit to be a monk. By the way, where is your father?
Jane: Why?
Joe: To arrange our wedding.
Jane: Give me a chance to think it over.
Joe: When can I have your answer?
Jane: Soon.
Joe: Bye-bye.

(*He leaves the stage.* **Jane** *stands and puts her hand on her brow and thinks. Her father and mother enter.*)

Jane: Oh, God . . . who am I to choose?
Mother: Harry is a handsome man. He can be a good husband to you.
Jane: But he cares only for secular matters. He has no depth of thought. . . . He is nearer to a strong, stout animal. I am not the kind of a woman who wants to satisfy her sexual appetite only.
Father: Don't be deceived by appearance.
Jane: I am not. I see that he is a "hollow man," as T. S. Eliot says.
Mother: I don't care about that.
Mother: He has a villa and a car . . . and . . .
Jane: I don't care about that.
Mother: The other girls will envy you when you marry him.
Jane: That doesn't make me happy.
Mother: Do you want to marry this man who sells words?
Jane: His words make me think and forget the world.
Mother: But we are living in this world.

Jane: I prefer Joe to Harry. But Joe cannot be a good husband.

Father: Don't marry any man until you are convinced about him.

Jane: Don't be afraid, Dad. I can't sacrifice my life and marry anyone who is not fit. If Harry represents "the body," Joe represents "the Soul" . . . I want a man who keeps the equilibrium . . . a man of soul and body . . . and I shall wait for him. . . . I *will* wait for him.

(*Curtain*)

